









# ADVENTURES OF A NOVELIST.

*Books by Gertrude Atherton*

MRS. BALFAME

PERCH OF THE DEVIL

THE LIVING PRESENT

THE GORGEOUS ISLE

THE AVALANCHE

AMERICAN WIVES AND ENGLISH HUSBANDS

SISTERS-IN-LAW

DORMANT FIRES

BLACK OXEN

THE CRYSTAL CUP

THE IMMORTAL MARRIAGE

VENGEFUL GODS

THE ARISTOCRATS

SENATOR NORTH

THE DOOMSWOMAN

A WHIRL ASUNDER

THE SOPHISTICATES

# ADVENTURES OF A NOVELIST

*by*

GERTRUDE  
ATHERTON



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# CONTENTS

BOOK ONE	11
BOOK TWO	63
BOOK THREE	139
BOOK FOUR	227
BOOK FIVE	295
BOOK SIX	339
BOOK SEVEN	433
BOOK EIGHT	489
BOOK NINE	519
INDEX	559



*To*  
*My Kind and Scholarly Editor*





# ADVENTURES OF A NOVELIST



## BOOK I

### I

ONE'S first memories, I fancy, are valuable chiefly for the backgrounds they involve; and 'backgrounds' sometimes retreat more swiftly into the past than the vital, confident men who had so large a share in their making. Even the London I knew well in the 'nineties and early nineteen-hundreds seems now but a mere page of history. How much more so the California of my early life. San Francisco lives so intensely in the present that she has almost forgotten the earthquake and fire of 1906; it is doubtful if her enterprising citizens of to-day could recall off-hand the names of men so ambitious, imperative, and dominant in their time that they must have believed themselves immortal. *Sic transit.* Their names are carved on imposing monuments in Lone Mountain cemetery, long since closed to the newer dead, ignored by the public, and, as surely as any potter's field, doomed to obliteration in the inexorable march of the city.

But this is not to be a melancholy tale.

My earliest confused memories of San Francisco are wooden sidewalks, cobble-stones – mud-puddles in the streets; hacks (some of the drivers local characters); hills so steep that no one built on them until the invention of the cable car; fog-horns; Emperor Norton, a harmless lunatic in a shabby uniform, driven insane by brooding over the execution of Maximilian; North Beach – where there were monkeys; well-dressed crowds of men and women on Kearney and Montgomery Streets, the quarter of shops, hotels, and restaurants; Chinamen in pigtails; lamplighters; my grandfather's stove-pipe hat; clouds of dust from the outlying sandhills driven through the city by the afternoon

winds; white fogs rolling in; constant fires; jingling horse-cars; and, in the scattered residence district, rows of wooden houses with bow windows . . . Market Street, one of the widest streets in the world, cutting the city in two.

I was born on Rincon Hill, a slight elevation south of Market Street and covered with roomy houses in pleasant gardens, two or three of which lingered there until the fire of 1906. Rincon Hill, South Park at its feet, Folsom and two or three other streets near-by, and, in the north, running up the hill, Stockton Street and its immediate western neighbours, were the only places in those days where one could be born respectably. Of them, however, I have no early recollection; my childhood was passed on a ranch sixty miles 'down the peninsula.' After my mother's divorce from her first husband, she returned to her father, Stephen Franklin, and as he had recently bought this property – it was only thirty acres, but anything over three was called a ranch at that time – and established his wife and son there, visiting them at week-ends (by stage), it seemed to him – not to my mother! – the right place for us.

Stephen Franklin until the age of forty had every reason to believe that the bright star of destiny had hung over his cradle. Born in Oxford, New York, a city founded by his father, Amos Franklin (a grand-nephew of Benjamin Franklin), and threatened with tuberculosis when he was sixteen, he was sent to New Orleans to recover his health. It was not the climate that cured him, however, but yellow fever and cholera, which burnt up all the tubercular germs – and left his hair as silvery as a newly-minted dollar; he lived, it may be said in passing, to the age of eighty, a superb figure of a man, tall, noble, and dignified, who was pointed out to strangers on the streets as the handsomest of San Francisco's many handsome men. He was the more conspicuous for being smooth-shaven, a novelty for many years.

As soon as his education was finished, instead of returning to the little city of his birth, he remained in New Orleans and went into business. Money flowed into his hands. I believe he had plantations and cotton factories, although he was a silent man and rarely spoke of the past.

Meanwhile he had sent for the girl to whom he had been attached from childhood, and my mother and her brother John were born at his country place, Pass Christian, now a flourishing 'resort.' Every summer he took his family north to escape the heat, and during one of these migrations his partner speculated and ruined the firm.

He was forty at the time, an age at which men were far older then than now, and he never recovered from the blow. The mainspring of his initiative was broken, owing in a measure, perhaps, to his Presbyterianism, with its gloomy belief in predestination. His lucky star had set for ever.

He left the remnants of the business in his partner's hands, and entering my mother at the then famous Spingler Institute in Union Square, New York, he went first to Central America – why, I never knew – and thence to San Francisco, already in the 'fifties a flourishing little city. Other men, many of whom became his friends, were soon on the high road to fortune, but the genius for money-making had deserted him. A great character in many ways, noble, honourable, unselfish, kind, generous, he never mended that broken spring. He became the editor of one of San Francisco's first newspapers, but in 1864 the Bank of California was founded by two of his friends, William C. Ralston and D. O. Mills, and they made him its secretary. There he remained until his death; and although his exquisite copperplate handwriting and perfect prose were familiar in all the great banks of the world, that was the sum of his later achievements. He had refused the more lucrative position of treasurer, for no one knew better than he that he had little sense of the value of money. (My

mother, when she returned for the second time to his roof, never permitted him to do any of the household shopping after he paid sixteen dollars for a servant's-room blanket. He knew how to preach economy but nothing of practising it. At his funeral a small army of beggars stood in front of the church.)

His New Orleans partner, of another calibre, speculated more wisely, and, in a sudden access of conscience, sent him thirty thousand dollars. He immediately bought a charming country place; he had always had a country place and it seemed the natural thing to do. As he had only his salary to keep it up, and entertained as freely as in the South, he soon found himself hopelessly involved, and sold Laurelwood to Peter Donohue, one of the new millionaires. With what was left after his debts were paid, he bought 'The Ranch,' which, being more isolated and unpretentious, he managed to keep for many years.

A year or two after his arrival in San Francisco he sent for my mother. She was very beautiful, vivacious, flirtatious, fascinating, with a naturally brilliant mind and not an atom of common sense. Nor had she any awareness of the change in the family fortunes. Brought up until the age of fifteen on a Southern plantation, surrounded by slaves, luxury was in her blood, with its concomitant love of pleasure. Thence she went to a fashionable boarding-school in New York, and another in New Haven, spending her vacations with wealthy friends of her father. There was nothing to suggest to her gay care-free mind that life was not hers to command. When she arrived in San Francisco after the long sea voyage, she lived at its best hotel with her parents, and although told in plain language by my practical grandmother that her father would never be a rich man again, the warning made little impression. The novelty of the city distracted her; it was socially very gay; she was beautiful and captivating; and the world was made for

youth. She had beaux by the score, and was too interested in being a belle and breaking hearts to think of 'settling herself.'

At that time there was an unusual number of gallant and charming men in San Francisco; young men whose family fortunes had declined, and who were far too considerate to disgrace their people by working in their native city. Out here on the edge of creation, connected with the East and South neither by railroad nor telegraph wires, it was quite another matter. Moreover, it was work or starve, and they did their best. One even sold shoe-laces on the street, and with no detriment to his social position. San Francisco Society in those days was wholly in the hands of Southerners, to whom family was all and money naught.

All danced attendance upon the beautiful Gertrude Franklin, and one—the gentleman of the shoe-laces, now a bank clerk—threatened suicide unless she promised to marry him. My mother in telling this story said to me: 'I folded my arms and laughed.' In reading Ouida later I was often reminded of my mother.

My father-to-be, Thomas Lodowick Horn, born in Stonington, Connecticut, of a long line of shipping men, was a man of another kidney.\* He and his brother Benjamin devoted themselves to business and prospered. He was one of my mother's most determined suitors, but she disdained even to flirt with him. He was not only a Yankee but looked like one. (To the day of her death she was a red-hot Southerner.)

Finally Mr. Ralston and Mr. Mills called on her one day and delivered a lecture. 'You must be made to realize,' they said in effect, 'that you are no longer a Southern heiress but the daughter of a poor man, a man on a salary, and who will never be anything else. The best man that ever lived, but a man without a future. In this cut-throat

\* My father's blood was Dutch and French, and I have reason to believe that his family was connected with that of George Sand.



community it takes a man of unconquerable energy and ruthless initiative to succeed, and your father has lost both, if he ever had them.

'The only man worth considering who wishes to marry you is Thomas Horn. He is rich now and will be richer. The others are decent fellows, but good for little save dancing and flirting. Youth passes quickly, my dear, and only in youth has a woman the power to marry well. You will be on the shelf before you know it, your chances gone.'

My mother protested that she hated Yankees (quite forgetting that every drop of her blood was Northern), liked neither Mr. Horn nor his name, that she didn't want to marry yet; she was only nineteen and having a wonderful time. She wept; she vowed she'd never marry a man unless she loved him; she no doubt had hysterics. But they returned to the siege several times, and finally prevailed. They were supported by her parents, who thought the match highly desirable.

The marriage lasted three years. My father built a house on Rincon Hill and permitted his young wife every extravagance. But she hated him increasingly. They quarrelled incessantly; he took to drink, and as my mother was in hysterics most of the time while I was on the way, it is a wonder I was not born an idiot. Undoubtedly the abnormal conditions caused that dislocation of particles, or rotten spot in the brain, or whatever it may be that produces fiction.

The divorce created a terrific sensation. In these days it is difficult to realize the disgrace incurred by divorce in the 'sixties. It is quite possible that my mother was the first woman to apply for one in San Francisco. My grandfather and grandmother had the sympathy of the community. My father forswore drink for ever and devoted himself to business; Society knew him no more. My mother was ostracized as if she had been a leper wandering through the streets in a cowl, a warning bell in her hand.

But she spent little of her time on The Ranch. A few friends were loyal. She stayed with them in town and they accompanied her when she paid us one of her visits. Her admirers flocked about her once more. And social ostracism meant nothing to her so long as she had men at her feet.

One of my first vivid memories is of some ten or fifteen buggies hitched under the large oaks and sycamores surrounding the ranch house. The young men drove sixty miles on the Sundays when she was there and spent the day. Faithful souls! Their names are as forgotten as their dust.

## II

No doubt the ranch was a healthy place for me, but it was desolate enough for my grandmother. I remember her as a thin brown little woman, very trim and erect, but prematurely old. Softened by those years of luxury in the South, she was unequal to the hardships of pioneer life. Her spirit was indomitable and she never complained, but it is a wonder she lived as long as she did. It was almost impossible to get servants to remain for more than a week so far out in the country, and for months at a time she did all the housework, and the cooking for the men employed on the farm.

And she had her hands full with me. I was the angel child in appearance, with golden curls and eyes of seraphic blue, but I must have been a little fiend. It had amused my father to stand me on the table when he was giving a dinner-party and encourage me to kick the plates into the laps of the guests. He spoilt me, my grandfather spoilt me, my mother spoilt me—and so did her friends, who showered me with toys. My grandmother, who had spoilt her own children, had recognized the evil long since, and did her best to make me over. But she adored me. I knew her weakness, and delighted in tormenting her.

When company was expected she would dress me up in white with a blue sash, and I would go out and roll in a puddle. One Sunday when the house was full, not a spoon nor a fork could be found. I had planted them in the garden, expecting to see them sprout. Across the road lived two bare-foot children with whom I was forbidden to play. I ran away daily, and, discarding my shoes and stockings, played with my humble companions in the hay or in the middle of the creek. When I returned, covered from head to foot with mud or barnyard filth, I regaled my grandmother, after the perfunctory spanking, with tales of imaginary adventures in which Indians and fairies played the major roles. Once she took me to a fashionable health resort, Warm Springs, as she needed a cure. She dressed me in my best embroideries and implored me to behave myself. When we were half-way down the long dining-room, filled with ladies and gentlemen from San Francisco, many of them her friends, I flung myself on the floor, beat a tattoo with my heels, and emitted ear-piercing shrieks. The guests jumped from their seats and rushed to the scene, convinced I was being murdered. My kind little grandmother, mortified beyond endurance, lost her temper for once, jerked me to my feet, and marched me off by the ear. In the blessed privacy of our room she spanked me soundly – more shrieks – and put me to bed without any dinner. Nor did she eat any herself, but went to bed with a headache.

I am not so sure that an egocentric childhood – when combined with a strong will – is a bad beginning for one whom life has destined for a career. One at least does not start out in life with an inferiority complex, than which surely nothing can be more hampering. All careers are beset with disappointments, knock-down blows, failures, the persistent enmity of mean vestigial minds – to say nothing of one's own mistakes. But if one has that inner conviction, however illogical it may appear at the time, that one *must*

succeed (i.e. have one's own way), that the reverse is unthinkable, pertinacity is as natural as confidence and the battle is half won.

But this is by the way.

During those hours when my grandmother was not too busy to keep an eye on me, she devoted herself to my education, and I could read and spell when I was four. True, I would not keep still, but pranced about the room during the lessons, and as she was a nervous woman this must have tried her sorely. But she was grateful that I was willing to learn on any terms. During the sewing lessons I was tied to the chair, and she read fairy tales aloud to keep me quiet. But the mortal never lived who could teach me to sew.

As time passed, my mother spent more time on the ranch. Despite her love of pleasure, she was the most warm-hearted of women and fond of her parents. She helped my grandmother with the work, but her beaux still came down on Sundays, and she made friends with a girl whose father owned the neighbouring ranch. This girl's name was Lizzie Miller, a beautiful little creature, then poor as poverty, but destined to a radiant future. Many years later she married George Ladd, a wealthy man who had captured for California the agency of the newly-invented telephone. She must have looked back with amusement at those days when she too cooked in a ranch house, and she and my mother, seeking a little diversion, used to hitch up a buggy and drive to San José, three miles distant. The horse was an old nag which could never be induced to go faster than a walk. On cold days they would sit on the floor of the buggy, cover themselves with the rug, and go to sleep. When all motion ceased at a barn on the outskirts of the town they woke up, and, no doubt, indulged in an orgy of shopping when their purses permitted; they were empty most of the time.

### I I I

FIVE years passed before my mother married again. Still romantic, she was awaiting the prince.

My grandmother's health broke finally and my grandfather took a house on Stockton Street – in a row, of course; there were few detached houses in the 'sixties. She was carried to town on a mattress – in the stage coach! – and died soon after, worn out before her time. She could hardly have been fifty.

Meanwhile my mother had found the prince. John Fredrick Uhlhorn, the scion of an old New York family, whose first American ancestor had dropped a title somewhere between Amsterdam and Manhattan Island, came to San Francisco to enter the Quartermaster's Department. San Francisco has ever received with open arms the distinguished New Yorker, and this was a brother-in-law of one of the famous Lorillards. He cut a tremendous swath, for his family – no doubt glad to get rid of him – had provided him amply with funds; he was not only a man of the great world in the eyes of this proud and isolated community but exceedingly handsome according to the canons of the day; although Dundreary whiskers would hardly improve any man now.

He was rotten to the core, but he must have had some lingering remnant of good in him, for he fell in love with and proposed to my mother who had not a penny to her name. She was probably the happiest woman in California.

The wedding, which took place on the day of Lincoln's assassination, was very quiet, owing to the recent death of my grandmother. No one was present except Mr. Ralston and Mr. Mills, myself and my grandfather, who held my hand firmly and had admonished me that if I did not behave myself he would slipper me the instant the ceremony was over.

But I was too interested to misbehave. I had never seen a wedding before. Moreover, I was somewhat subdued, for only a short time since I had attended the funeral of my grandmother in that long gloomy parlour. I had been forced to kiss her as she lay in her coffin and it seemed to me that I never should get the faint smell of corruption mingled with tuberoses out of my nostrils.

My mother looked very beautiful in a lavender silk gown over a small hoop and trimmed with long loops of gimp. Her warm brown hair was arranged in masses of curls caught at the nape of the neck with a jewelled ornament. Her immense grey eyes looked like stars. She was short but perfectly made, and even after she grew stout never lost her tiny wrists and ankles, hands and feet. Mr. Uhlhorn\* stood very straight and imposing beside her. I suppose a handsomer couple has rarely been seen in San Francisco.

I remember Mr. Ralston turning to my grandfather and saying in his hearty voice: 'I never attended a more charming wedding. I am sure they will be happy.'

But my mother was a child of misfortune.

They went to Calistoga for the honeymoon and I embraced the opportunity to run away. I was discovered some hours later in a sand lot by one of the servants and marched home. My grandfather was walking up and down the hall, too worried to keep still, and he looked at me grimly as I entered, very dirty and dragging behind my rescuer. He was the kindest of men but he could be very stern.

'You know what I told you,' he said severely; 'that if you did not behave yourself while your mother was away I should chastise you myself.' He sighed heavily. 'It will hurt me more than it will hurt you, but I shall do my duty.'

He took my hand and led me upstairs and into his room.

\* It was an odd coincidence that the name of my mother's first husband was Horn, her second Uhlhorn, and that her only brother should marry a Langhorne.

There he produced the largest slipper I have ever seen – a carpet slipper – and laid me across the bed. But his hand failed him, and after one or two gentle taps I rolled over and over in wicked laughter. Finally I sat up and looked at him, standing there embarrassed and helpless. ‘You know,’ I said, ‘I wouldn’t have minded if you’d really hurt, for I’m so used to spankings I don’t feel them. And anyhow I never care, so long as I’ve got what I wanted first.’

But this was too much. He locked me in the closet.

## I V

FOR a short time the young couple lived with my grandfather, who had taken the house for a year. The dislike between Mr. Uhlhorn and myself, was, from the first, mutual and intense. He regarded me, and justly, as a spoilt brat; why I hated him I do not know, but I did, and delighted in annoying him in every way my fertile mind could conceive. The climax came one day when I hurtled down the banisters and almost knocked him over, big as he was.

My mother, anxious for her new-found happiness, packed me off to a small boarding-school on Ellis Street, kept by two Hollanders, Mrs. Wilson and Mrs. Reynolds. And there a singular event happened which I have never been able to interpret. Something valuable disappeared. Questions failing to elicit any information, we were all, boarders, day-scholars, and servants, summoned into the darkened parlour where Mrs. Wilson sat with a basket in her lap. We could barely see a small still black animal in the basket, and no children were ever more frightened. Mrs. Reynolds stood by the door to prevent a precipitate retreat.

‘You will all of you,’ said Mrs. Wilson, in a deep ominous voice, ‘pass in turn and lay your hand on this creature, and when the guilty one touches it there will be a growl – but it will not hurt you.’

Terrified and shaking we dragged ourselves forward and did as we were told. It was a slimy beast and our palms were black when we withdrew them. There was no result. The enigma did not even whimper.

This singular performance in the darkened parlour was by no means as strange as what followed, for the inference is natural that Mrs. Wilson expected the criminal to be nervous and pinch the thing until it squealed; but the next morning when we who boarded there awoke, we found the palms of our hands black and slimy. I slept in a large room with three other children, a cot in each corner, and was awakened by hysterical screams. One of my companions had awakened first and the mere thought of contact in her sleep with that disgusting object drove her frantic. No explanation was ever vouchsafed us. Nor, as far as I know, was the valuable possession, whatever it may have been, recovered. I have asked several Hollanders if they knew of this singular version of trial by ordeal, and the answer has always been in the negative.

## V

MR. UHLHORN left the Quartermaster's Department, entered the brokerage business, and prospered for a while. His family, highly pleased with him at this time, advanced the capital.

As my grandfather, his lease expired, went into lodgings, he took a house on Oak Grove Avenue, a short street running, I think, from Folsom to Brannan, lined with fine residences in gardens and a row of new tall brown houses, in one of which we were handsomely installed. My mother, now reinstated in Society, went out constantly to dinners and parties; she sometimes came into my room to say good-night before leaving, but I remember only one of her gowns:



a bright green corded silk, trimmed with *crêpe* leaves, which inspired me with the ambition to grow up at once and inherit it.

It was the fashion in those days to be plump, and she had a tiny waist between 'swelling hips' and a low full bust. Her shoulders were magnificent. She had as many admirers as ever, but eyes for no one but her husband.

I was all ears and overheard much gossip when I was supposed to be reading fairy tales in a corner of the large front bedroom and my mother was enjoying an afternoon visit from her more intimate friends. Of course, the talk was all of dress, personalities, and scandals; what else did they have to talk about? Scandal made no impression on me, but I was very much interested in this and that about the 'belles': the 'three Macs,' Ella Maxwell, Mollie McMullen, and Jennie McNulty; my future sisters-in-law, Alejandra and Elena Atherton. Another, whose tragic story I have told in *A Daughter of the Vine*, was Nelly Gordon, whose father had built South Park. Even then there were rumours that she 'drank,' and her terrible old mother, never seen, was supposed to be in a perpetual state of inebriety.

I believe Bret Harte – employed in the Mint – was a beau at that time, and an expert at croquet! But although my grandfather and mother knew him, I never saw him. He made Alejandra Atherton, who was half Spanish, the heroine of several of his stories.

There was a picture of Mark Twain in an album Mr. Uhlhorn had brought from New York, and I dimly remember a tall man with bushy hair and eyebrows coming one night to dinner; I caught but a glimpse of him in the hall below as I hung over the banisters in my nightgown. He was on his way round the world before writing *Innocents Abroad*. It was published by subscription and I can recall the excitement when the large calf-bound book arrived.

Everybody discussed it for months, whether 'they' read it or not.

Poor Mr. Uhlhorn was forced to endure me at this time. My mother, indignant at the ordeal to which I had been subjected by 'two superstitious fools,' sent me to another boarding-school, but I was returned with thanks at the end of the first day. I had demoralized the school by turning somersaults in the class rooms. There was nothing to do but put up with me at home, but as time passed I disliked Mr. Uhlhorn too thoroughly to annoy him. When he noticed me at all, it was with an icy politeness that left me with no recourse but to run my tongue out at him. I kept out of his way.

Why the children in the neighbourhood played with me I cannot imagine (unless it were on account of my abundant toys which I gave away freely), for I generally finished the hour by beating them up, and one I threw downstairs. Nurses were a problem, for none would remain more than a month. This problem, however, was solved when my sister Aleece was born, and the wet-nurse offered to take me over. She had three children of her own and announced grimly that 'she guessed she could manage me or know the reason why.'

This remarkable woman, Rose Stoddard, forced by a worthless husband to go out and support her children, came to us for a short period and remained in the family for thirty-five years – the most devoted, loyal, all-enduring creature I have ever known. And she knew how to manage me. She spanked me with gusto – no other nurse had been permitted to touch my sacred person – but she won my affection and interest by more subtle methods. She coaxed me to read to her and to learn poetry for her entertainment, and she sang, at the top of her voice, the most rollicking of Irish songs. And I never tired of listening to the stories of her own life, her children, and friends.

She was very fat and I used to sit regarding with fascinated eyes my frail little sister tugging at one of her enormous breasts – which she would exhibit with superb indifference on any one's front doorstep, in a shop, or in a street car; with Aleece cradled in her big strong arms – she disdained a baby carriage – she took me for long walks every day, and when we were tired boarded a car and rode all over town. Sometimes we called on her friends in the humbler quarters and they treated me to jam and gingerbread. These visits were always the reward of excessive virtue on my part, and when deprived of them for a week I wept stormily.

But she by no means exterminated the imp in me and there were times when it broke out. I remember distinctly one evening when my sister was ill and restless and Rose dared not put her down nor even raise her voice. She had a new hat my mother had given her and was looking forward to wearing it on her next visit to less fortunate friends. I took this hat from the wardrobe and, seating myself before her – at a safe distance – snipped it to pieces with a large pair of scissors. I shall never forget the rumbling accompaniment of 'Billingsgate,' for she had a broad Irish tongue and could use the most terrible language. I was dealt with later on.

My mother had a singular habit, peculiar perhaps to her time. Every now and then she would draw the curtains of her bedroom, lie down on the sofa, announce that she was going to have the blues, and was not to be disturbed. There she would remain, sometimes for three days, refusing to eat or speak. Everybody would go about on tiptoe. Mr. Uhlhorn retired to the spare bedroom. Then she would suddenly come to, bath and dress herself, and be as gay and charming as ever. Whether this morbid indulgence was due to the fact that blues were the fashion, or she was tired of everybody and wanted to rest, or because melancholy

for some reason really overwhelmed her, or pure cussedness, was a problem I never solved. But upon her revival she was always treated like a queen and every one hastened to obey her lightest behest.

I attended a day school in the neighbourhood, kept by a protégée of my grandfather, who endured me for his sake. At home I was a passionate reader of fairy tales, and they did their share in keeping me quiet. One day, however, I picked up a novel called *The Daughter of an Empress*, by Louisa Mühlbach, then enjoying a tremendous vogue. I was gazing entranced at the harrowing illustrations when my mother snatched it from me and told me to go back to my fairy tales.

I was determined to read that book. Outside the bathroom door was a straw hamper for soiled clothes, three or four feet in height. I waited until it was emptied on Monday morning, and, watching my chance, lowered myself into its depths with the book. The hamper stood under a window that gave me all the light I needed and I was immediately absorbed.

It was some time before I was missed. Then the servant whose duty it was to escort me to school reported to my mother that I couldn't be found. Immediate uproar. The house was searched from top to bottom, even the coalbins in the cellar. Rose waddled about calling my name in coaxing accents. My mother had hysterics. Mr. Uhlhorn was summoned from his office and cursed fluently. There was but one solution, of course: I had run away. Every neighbour was visited. The police was called out. The door bell rang incessantly.

I read on undisturbed. Nothing to me if the entire household expired of anxiety, not even impending punishment, so enthralled was I with the adventures and misfortunes of that unhappy Russian princess. I read until the afternoon light faded and I had finished gasping over the painful end of

the heroine, knouted to death by brutal executioners. Then, discovering that I was hungry, I tipped over the hamper and crawled out.

My mother had gone to bed with a splitting headache. She left me to Rose.

## V I

THESE halcyon days did not last long – a year or two at most. Mr. Uhlhorn failed in business. He was a congenital gambler – one reason why he had been shipped West, under orders to reform. Nor did he confine his gambling to the stock market; San Francisco was full of gambling houses and the lure was irresistible. He not only dropped all he had at the tables but sold my mother's jewels. His family cast him off. There was already a rift, for his wife, who up to a point had corresponded amiably with her mother-in-law, refused to name the baby after her – Sarah Maria! Who could blame her?

There were no more dinners, luncheons, and balls. No more carriages before the door on my mother's 'day.' No more drives to the Cliff House on fine afternoons when all the wealth and fashion of the city turned out behind spanking teams to gaze at the illimitable ocean, the chattering seals on their rock, one another's clothes, and hope for a glimpse of veiled women stealing into the disreputable low-browed building on the cliff.

My sister, Daisy, was born in the second-class Brooklyn Hotel, on the corner of Bush and Sansome Streets, and next door to the old Mercantile Library. She nearly died when she was three months old, and better if she had, for she too was a child of misfortune.

After that I remember moving into small and smaller lodgings in unfashionable streets, eating at restaurants, Mr.

Uhlhorn glowering, my mother often weeping, the children squalling, Rose always with us. There could have been no money for wages, but her devotion to my mother and her foster-child was as unreasoning as it was absolute. Her own children were farmed out among friends.

It was during this period that we spent a few months in Oakland, and there occurred one of those apparently insignificant episodes that so often leave their mark on character. My grandfather, who paid for my desultory education at this time, sent me to a day-school near my mother's boarding-house and kept by a Mrs. Blake – after I had promised him solemnly to behave myself. As I rarely broke a promise to him there was nothing to complain of in my reports.

It was toward the end of the term and the graduation exercises were to take place in a local theatre. All the little girls were ordered to appear in a costume consisting of a white tarlatan skirt, red flannel Garibaldi blouse, and blue sash. When I carried this news to my mother she exclaimed: 'Never! No child of mine shall wear such a rig.' Accordingly she made me a dress of fine white swiss, tucked to the waist, and resurrected a handsome blue sash. I dared tell no one at the school that I was compelled to disobey orders, and arrived at the theatre on the great day at the last moment possible. Some twenty little girls, proud in their red, white and blue, were waiting outside, and I slunk in among them. I caught Mrs. Blake's eye and saw it flash, but it was too late to do anything and I went in with the rest. My seat in the gallery was at the very end of the front row, and I felt horribly conspicuous and in momentary fear of a visit from Mrs. Blake. But she was occupied downstairs, and suddenly one of the teachers left her seat and put her lips to my ear. 'I want to tell you,' she whispered, 'that your dress is lovely and makes all the other children ridiculous. Be proud of that fact and don't worry about being different.'

I must have swelled visibly. From that moment on it was my ambition to be as 'different' as possible.

Mr. Uhlhorn must have got a position of some sort through the influence of one of his few remaining friends, for when Aleece was three and Daisy two we moved into a fashionable boarding-house in San Francisco on the corner of Market and Powell Streets. Here the endless pageant from the window amused me (I remember the first parade of the labourers for an eight-hour day), and as I was now twelve and somewhat improved in behaviour I was allowed, Rose having her hands full with the two children, to go to school alone and roam about the neighbourhood. I made friends with a number of booksellers and perched on their counters for hours at a time. They were amused at my precocity and lent me books. One even let me 'tend shop.' Occasionally my father sent his old darky servant for me on Sundays and took me to my Uncle Ben's mansion on Rincon Hill or to his country house on Lake Merritt in Oakland. My father at this time had lost his money, and received no help from his brother who was as stingy as he was rich. Not long after, however, he went down and my father went up, and supported him until his apoplectic death.

But that time is for ever made memorable by the great earthquake of 1868. It was eight o'clock in the morning and I was in my mother's large corner bedroom. Rose had gone downstairs to get the children's breakfast. My mother and I were awaiting her return before going to the dining-room. Mr. Uhlhorn must have been away.

Suddenly there was a low menacing roar, then a terrific upheaval that flung the house about like a cork on the waters, accompanied by the horrid sound of protesting masonry, running feet, and piercing screams. My mother stood as if turned into stone. The wardrobe walked out into the middle of the room. An immense crystal chandelier gave a mighty swing. Aleece was standing directly underneath it.

Obeying a blind instinct I sprang forward and rushed her to the other side of the room just as it snapped and fell. At this moment Rose burst into the room, her hands full of bread. Muttering 'My God! My God! My God! Holy Mary! Holy Mary!' she slung Aleece under one arm and Daisy under the other, still holding on to the bread, and, with the surprising agility of the stout, ran down two flights of stairs and out into the street. I followed her through halls crowded with gasping, hysterical women, many of them in scant attire. Only Judge and Mrs. Morrison, standing in their doorway, were entirely composed and laughed heartily at the vision of fat Rose with a kicking child under each arm, her hands maintaining their firm grasp on the bread. I was probably goggle-eyed; I had not been frightened upstairs but flight induced panic. As I passed Mrs. Morrison she said, 'What are you afraid of, my child? It is only an earthquake.' But I dashed on. I had always found safety with Rose.

The city had already burned down five times, but on this occasion, with greater provocation than ever before, it was miraculously spared. By half-past eight all were seated at breakfast in the dining-room volubly relating their 'experiences.' More than one had been in the bath tub. Nor was there any loss of life in San Francisco, although, had the earthquake occurred half an hour later, it might have taken a heavy toll; a number of buildings were in process of erection and many workmen would have been perched precariously on the scaffoldings.

## V I I

SHORTLY after, we moved into a pleasant little house on Jones Street. But there was no superfluous money, no more parties, no more entertaining at home. We lived a very



quiet life and only old and tried friends came to the house. Mr. Uhlhorn and my mother quarrelled a good deal (I grew up with the idea that the matrimonial condition was a succession of bickerings), but she was still devoted to him, and as he was out a good deal at night no doubt she was jealous of him.

Rose found a good cook, and was chamber-maid as well as nurse.

This blessed interval may have lasted for two years. Mr. Uhlhorn had promised my mother to gamble no more and his salary amply covered the household expenses. Rose sang at her work once more.

Then came the debacle.

There was gloom in the house. Even I, who cared for nothing but reading at this time, running home from school to bury my nose in a story-book, knew that something dire had happened. My mother was white and tearful. Mr. Uhlhorn was silent and sullen, and always in the house. Rose muttered under her breath.

Then one night, Rose, running across me in the hall, told me sharply not to go near the front bedroom; Mr. Uhlhorn was ill. I accordingly went to the door and looked in. He lay sprawled on the bed, fully dressed, his eyes closed, and breathing stertorously. I did not know until long after that he had tried to kill himself with chloroform. My mother was standing motionless by his side looking down at him.

Terrified, I ran back to my room and shut myself in. But I did not go to bed nor did I read. Tragedy was in the air, and no doubt we were in for a new series of misfortunes; but I think that, even as in my future life when death or any sort of disaster impended, I was chiefly moved by a sense of drama. Mingled with apprehension was a keen expectation of something interesting to come.

It came at midnight. Prowling about the house, but keeping out of the way of Rose, I heard a carriage drive up to

the door. I ran to the head of the stairs and hung over the banisters, marvelling to hear my grandfather's voice as Rose opened the front door.

He was a slow-moving man as a rule, but to-night he ascended the stairs rapidly. His face, usually benignant, was white and set, his eyes almost glaring behind the gold-rimmed spectacles that always seemed a part of him. I ran forward to greet him, but he brushed me aside and strode into the room where Mr. Uhlhorn, in overcoat and hat, his mouth flaccid, his expression vacuous, a bag in his hand, stood swaying on his feet.

My grandfather, without a word, seized him by the arm, dragged him out of the room and down the stairs. In another moment the carriage drove off. I learned in due course that my grandfather put Mr. Uhlhorn on board a ship bound for South America, and told him never to show his face in California again. He had forged the name of his employer for a large amount – probably to pay his gambling debts – and the victim forebore to prosecute out of friendship for my grandfather and on condition that he left the country at once.

But no influence could keep it out of the newspapers, and public humiliation was added to my mother's despairing grief. She was completely crushed. For days she did not speak, and doubtless she would have fallen into a state of melancholia had not Daisy come down with varioloid. There was a small-pox epidemic in the city.

Small-pox epidemics were no novelty in San Francisco at that period of its history, nor for many years after. I was never without a camphor bag round my neck, and when going to and from school, made wide detours to avoid houses displaying the warning yellow flag. The pest house, out in the sand wastes, became so crowded during these epidemics that additional victims were isolated in their own houses. It was some time during the 'eighties that Dr. Mears

became Health Officer and made a house-to-house campaign, vaccinating every one in the city. There has never been a small-pox epidemic since.

My mother was forced out of her semi-coma and nursed my sister, whose life for a time was despaired of. Aleece and I had chicken-pox, and between the three of us she had little time to think, and her mental health was restored.

## VIII

My grandfather came to live with us and assumed our support, although he had other demands on his salary, for his son had married and acquired a numerous progeny. He lived on The Ranch but never made it pay.

Rose did the cooking and ran the house as economically as she knew how. She proved to be a wonderful cook but all good cooks are extravagant. My mother, still the Southerner who had been brought up on a plantation surrounded by slaves, knew nothing of housekeeping and never learned. She could rise to any emergency, and as the years passed developed an extraordinary amount of passive endurance, but energy and initiative were not in her composition, and she would have expected to be waited on if the larder had been empty and the wolf at the door. Rose waited on her hand and foot.

My grandfather sent me to a large private day-school then called The City Female Seminary, but the name was changed later to Clarke Institute, a new member of the board regarding the word 'female' as indelicate.

At home I studied little and read the young people's stories of the day: *Little Women*, the Gipsy Brenton Series, Oliver Optic, and others whose names I have long since forgotten.

One memorable evening my grandfather called me into the parlour, which he had converted into a library to accom-

moderate his books. He was said at that time to have the finest private library in California: rows of calf-bound books, many of which had belonged to his father and were published in the eighteenth century. A formidable array that often terrified me.

That evening was a turning-point in my life, although I was filled with nothing but resentment at the time.

My grandfather was lying back in an easy chair, his face heavy with melancholy, but as kind as ever. I did not know it then, of course, but in addition to the crushing burden he carried, instead of deriving comfort from his religion he was haunted by the awful menace of predestination. The many misfortunes that had visited him he regarded as signs of displeasure from the Almighty and of the wrath to come. Why it never occurred to him that he was being sufficiently punished in this life, I cannot imagine. But Presbyterianism has never made any appeal to me and I know nothing of its inner workings. As Mr. Ralston once said, no better man ever lived; he was also a pillar of St. John's Church, and looked up to by all who knew him, but there is no doubt that he believed himself to be a sinner of the blackest dye, and predestined to some awful fate hereafter.

He did his best to save me. In addition to long family prayers twice a day (I always carefully secured a position behind him, and in the morning studied my lessons, at night braided my hair) I was marched to Sunday School, of which he was superintendent, and made to sit thereafter through interminable sermons by the Reverend Dr. Scott, also a shining light in the community. The net result was that I hated religion in any form.

On this particular evening he told me to sit down, as he had something to say to me.

Apprehensive, I fell into a chair, raking my mind for recent iniquities. I could think of nothing, for, interested in my new school and the friends I had made there, I had

behaved rather well of late. True, I bedevilled Rose when I had nothing better to do, but she had her own methods of dealing with me and never carried tales. Probably I was about to receive a general lecture on my shortcomings.

I was always a little in awe of my grandfather, although I knew that he loved me more than any one on earth. But, as I have said, he could be very stern at times.

'I have decided,' he began, putting the tips of his long fingers together, 'that the time has come to give a more serious turn to your mind. You are now fourteen, you do not, judging from your reports, seem to be much of a student, and you are wasting your time on stories written for boys and girls. You have naturally a bright mind, wayward as it is, and it is time to improve it. I wish you to become a well-read intellectual woman, and it is not too soon to begin. You will read aloud to me for two hours every night,' (my eyes ranged wildly over those calf-bound books) 'and as I do not wish to tax your mind too heavily at first we will begin with something light.' He picked up a book that lay on the table between us 'This is *The Conquest of Granada* by Washington Irving; a delightful book, which I shall be glad to read again, so to speak.'

I glanced at the dingy black-bound book with a shudder. Two hours! And I might be curled up in bed reading Oliver Optic. I looked at my grandfather. His eyes often twinkled but they were not twinkling now. They looked full of a deadly purpose.

'I don't know how to read aloud,' I muttered.

He replied suavely: 'You will soon learn. All you have to do is to read slowly and distinctly. Now begin.'

Despair in my heart, I picked up the ugly book and began to read as badly as I knew how. He corrected me politely but inexorably, and I soon came to the conclusion that it was less wearing to read well than to be interrupted every few minutes.

And for six nights a week thereafter I read aloud for two interminable hours. *The Conquest of Granada* was followed by Thiers's *History of the French Revolution*, two large volumes of yellow spotted pages; and thence I graduated to Hume's *History of England*, in heaven knows how many volumes. It was a fearful ordeal, plodding through those criminally dull books, but despite my bitter rebellion – sometimes openly expressed – my grandfather accomplished his purpose. My mental fibre was toughened, I was educated against my will into a taste for serious reading, and I have never ceased to be grateful to him.

Not that I dipped into those calf-bound books during my hours of leisure. The first effect was a distaste for young people's stories, and a passionate interest in novels. There was always a volume of Ouida lying round the house. She was the popular novelist of the day, and my mother could never have enough of her. I think she saw in those glamorous books all she would have liked to be and do herself, and no doubt she still had her dreams. Another favourite was *Jane Eyre*, which I must have read six times, and an intense romance named *Rutledge*, which might have been classified as one of Jane Eyre's bastards. But youth is not critical.

## I X

At school I studied as little as I could manage, living for recess when we gambled for glass buttons in the yard or ran about screaming in the exuberance of youth. After school hours I sometimes went home with my friends, and began to see something of the lives of other people.

And then, one day, I experienced the first prick of ambition.

In an immense hall above the class-rooms we sat at small individual desks, where we were supposed to study between

lessons, and also foregathered for the morning and evening roll call. Miss Spring, the principal, a short, dark, determined little woman, presided at a desk on the platform, and every Friday afternoon read out the names of the three girls who had stood highest in their classes during the week.

'Ethel Beaver, Dolly Eldridge, Florence Pope.' 'Ethel Beaver, Dolly Eldridge, Florence Pope.' Week after week, month after month, those names were droned out, the names of the three brightest and most studious girls in my class.

One Friday afternoon I sat up suddenly and scowled. 'I am sick of hearing those three names,' I exclaimed almost aloud. 'Why shouldn't *my* name be there? I'm as bright as they are, and I'll not stand it any longer.'

I turned abruptly from an idler into a hard student. Instead of reading novels or going to the houses of my friends every afternoon, I pored over my school-books, wrestling with sums (I never could conquer arithmetic), but taking naturally to geography, history, spelling and composition. I soon passed Dolly Eldridge and Florence Pope, but it was a constant duel with Ethel Beaver. She was an uncommonly clever girl, a small dark elf with a scornful eye. Sometimes I emerged triumphant from the weekly battle and sometimes I did not. But the facile victory has never appealed to me, and if she had been as easy to pass as the others I should soon have regarded the whole thing as a game and tired of it. As it was I had the excitement of Fridays to look forward to, and whether she or I emerged at the head of the list my name was always one of the three.

It was at this time – possibly because my compositions were sometimes read aloud by Miss Spring – that I conceived the idea of becoming an 'authoress.' The impulse to write must have been born in me, for when I lived on the ranch with my grandmother she often found me before a long mirror in the hall telling myself aloud wild stories of adventure. These and the yarns with which I regaled

her after my excursions across the road disturbed her greatly. Nothing was known of child psychology in those days, and she feared I was a born liar.

My composition teacher, Miss Haight, encouraged me, and the older girls brought me blank books and asked me to write a story for them, assuring me they would 'keep it always.' I could now revel in being 'different,' for not even Ethel Beaver could write stories, and the other girls regarded me with envy and awe.

The trouble with these effusions was that I never could finish them. They drove along swimmingly for a time and then my imagination gave out, or I grew bored and discarded the last for another. One day, however, I said to myself, 'This will never do. If I don't finish my stories now the habit will become fixed and I'll never finish anything.' Where such flashes of wisdom come from to visit the immature mind is a question difficult to answer, unless one has a guardian spirit out in the ether. Certainly there was no precocious wisdom in my own mind.

I obeyed the warning and finished my stories, however lamely. But for many a long year the impulse to write fiction was spasmodic. There were times when I forgot it altogether.

I gave my grandfather some of these stories to read. It was the dream of his life that I should 'write,' but he was always chary of praise, believing, no doubt, that bright little girls were conceited enough without encouragement from their elders. Sometimes, however, he was moved to sarcasm. One day I essayed a poem and carried it to him with pride. He read it through slowly and then handed it back. 'I should advise you,' he said, 'to confine yourself hereafter to prose.'

Perhaps it was the extreme dryness in his voice, as well as some responsive vibration in my depths, that convinced me with sudden finality that I was no poet.



My mother heard from Mr. Uhlhorn once or twice. I believe he wrote from the steamer and shortly after he landed in South America. After that, unbroken silence. Some years later he died alone in a New York hospital. His family, including his mother, were implacable to the end.

One of my mother's old admirers, Mortimer Hall, had been blown up with an Oakland ferry-boat. The hero of the shoe-laces had been killed in a duel. A good many of those once-devoted swains had married, but a few had not, and they returned to their former allegiance. One, become a very rich man and eminent in the community, begged her to get a divorce and marry him. There were, also, a brilliant and handsome army officer stationed at Benicia, and an army engineer from the East who came out to build a breakwater in the South. But she always hoped Mr. Uhlhorn would send for her; perhaps she had had enough of the matrimonial adventure for the present. Later on she regretted these lost opportunities bitterly enough. But she was always her own victim. Nature, so lavish in some things, was niggardly in others.

She was only thirty-four when Mr. Uhlhorn passed out of her life, and more beautiful than ever. When shopping with her on Kearney or Montgomery Street at the crowded hour, I noted with pride that women as well as men turned to look at her as she passed. But she seldom appeared in public. She was still humiliated by the disgrace Mr. Uhlhorn had visited upon his family, and had a morbid fear of being cut.

And cut she would have been by every lady of the old regime, for they could stick a good deal but not a criminal act recorded in the newspapers. All their sympathy was for my grandfather, who, however, resented their attitude and rarely entered their houses. I think my mother's very mis-

fortunes antagonized them, possibly because she permitted herself to be crushed. If she had been haughty and assertive, no doubt she could have brazened it out and bullied them into receiving her. But she had neither qualification in her.

Oddly enough, she liked to sew. She had been taught fine needlework as an accomplishment in her youth, and at this time made all the children's garments. A sewing-woman made her old ones over for me. My desire to be different did not extend to clothes and I wore them without a murmur. Before my nightly séance with my grandfather, she read the evening newspaper aloud to him, and then received her beaux in the dining-room.

As far back as I can remember her she made a fetish of her beauty and preserved it in every way she knew how. There were no beauty parlours in those days, nor 'hints' in the newspapers. But instinct served her. She went to bed every night with cold cream on her face an inch deep; therefore her skin was always soft and fine despite the harsh winds of San Francisco. As she had no gluttonous tendencies she kept her figure for many years. And she was excessively neat. I never saw a hair out of place nor her frocks other than perfectly adjusted, even when she was nursing my sister day and night. As time passed and her complexion lost its brilliancy she used a good deal of make-up, and invented a liquid powder called Cameline, which brought a fortune to the chemist to whom she gave the formula. It was always a consolation to her, I think, to look well, even in her later years when she rarely left the house and saw no one. But she resented bitterly the passing of youth. She would have been reconciled to anything if she could have kept the first freshness of her beauty. This had one salutary effect on me. I took a great interest in my own looks as I grew older, but made up my mind to have something to fall back on when they departed.

## X I

WHEN I reached the age of fifteen and some months I was sent to St. Mary's Hall, a boarding-school in Benicia. It was an Episcopalian school, and my grandfather, as I have mentioned, was a blue Presbyterian. But he was by no means narrow, and when a friend of his, Bishop Kip, assured him that it was the best boarding-school in California he sent me there. It stood just outside the little town, and on the hill above was St. Augustine's College for Boys, under the same diocese. Mrs. Ralston, who was taking up her eldest son, Sam, to enter him at the college, offered to chaperon me on the long journey. Sam and I roamed the boat by ourselves, fell in love, and exchanged vows of eternal fidelity. Shortly after, he sent me an autograph album with this poetic flight inscribed on the first page under two crossed tuberoses:

*Our love was never reckoned,  
Yet good it is and true.  
It's half the world to me.  
It's all the world to you.*

He was, no doubt, driven by the exigencies of the rhyme, but I resented the implication and my first love died a speedy death.

At St. Mary's I crammed for the examinations, but did little studying meanwhile. Boarding-school was a new and romantic world, and I was far more interested in midnight suppers (the viands stolen from the kitchen, unless we had received hampers from home), flirting with the boys of St. Augustine's from the windows or in church, or breaking more rules than the other girls. In fact it was my boast that I learned the rules only by breaking them, and every morning I was summoned to the bedroom of the principal, Miss Hatch, to receive a lecture.

Miss Hatch was a curious figure and hardly one to inspire awe in her pupils. She looked eighty, although she was probably less, and shook with what I now know to have been *paralysis agitans*. She had hair of palest blonde and wore a large chignon, which was always on the dressing-table when I entered. While peering near-sightedly at herself in the mirror, adjusting her scanty locks, and pinning the chignon in place, she delivered her lecture, asking me at intervals in her quavering voice if I were not ashamed of myself. I sat on the trunk swinging my legs, answering dutifully at intervals. 'Yes, ma'am.' I kept my promise not to break that particular rule again, but was careful to say nothing about the next. A few years later, old, friendless, and poor, she committed suicide in Golden Gate Park.

The beauty of the school was Florence Baldwin, the mother of the present Duchess of Marlborough, and who made a tragic mess of her own life. She had a soft olive skin, a 'nose with a ripple in it,' limpid blue eyes, and waving dusky hair, but at that time was indifferent to her beauty and never cast a glance at the boys.

Her father, Admiral Baldwin, was wealthy, but her mother had died some time before, and it was evident that she had been left to the mercy of servants. She had six watches and a number of other expensive trinkets, but her clothes were almost in rags and her stockings full of holes. As she was a helpless creature some of the older girls took pity on her and put her wardrobe in order. Its degeneration had not worried her; I never knew any creature more placid.

She came to our midnight revels, where we scrambled eggs, sometimes dropping them on the floor but scooping them up, dust and all, and contributed the large boxes of candy which she received regularly from home. But she had no gaiety of spirit and kept the other rules of the school meticulously. Beautiful but dumb we should call

her to-day. Years after, I met her again when she was Mrs. Deacon and the 'beauty of Paris'; a brief but triumphant reign.

One day a whisper ran round the school. A girl was 'going to be expelled!' What for? The older girls laughed when I asked them and withdrew to whisper apart. I was such an innocent then that I did not even suspect there was anything reprehensible to be known, but I was devoured with curiosity, and with my room-mate, Carrie Durbrow (afterward Mrs. Alfred Holman), equally innocent, indulged in agonized speculations. The worst we could think of was that she had put a snake in Miss Hatch's bed.

The girl was to be sent away in the dark of early morning, and for half an hour before, the upper halls were full of flitting white figures, mine among them, determined to have a last look at the sinner, who had been confined to her room for two days. Her mother had arrived the night before.

I have never forgotten the white morbid face of that girl as she slowly descended the stair, her mother, whiter than herself, behind her. Poor thing, she would be treated to-day by a psycho-analyst and an endocrinologist, and some attempt made not only to reorientate her mind but redistribute her hormones. Or she might be a queen among the homo-sexuals, regarded with admiration by those condemned to normality.

It was at St. Mary's that I discovered Dickens, or, to be more accurate, I was introduced to him by my favourite teacher, Miss Adie. There was a large packing-box out in the yard, and I sat in it for hours every afternoon and read. The glamour of Dickens was strong on me for years, and *Bleak House* I read many times.

## XII

SHORTLY after my seventeenth birthday I was sent to Sayre Institute in Lexington, Kentucky. My grandfather had a sister living there married to Major Robert Bullock, who had spent three years of the Civil War in a Northern prison (he helped to dig the tunnel through which General Morgan escaped). His slaves freed and his plantation confiscated, my aunt had supported her family by teaching school, but at this time he was treasurer of a bank and they had a place on the outskirts of the city.

I went East in state in the private carriage of Judge Field of the Supreme Court in Washington. He was a friend of my grandfather and both he and his wife were very kind to me, as well as the rest of his party. I was the only young person among them, and by this time, although careless and dreamy, flighty and still determined to have my own way, I was full of the pride of seventeen years and rarely misbehaved. Moreover, I was feeling somewhat devitalized, for I had been ill, and it was the threat of tuberculosis that had caused my grandfather to take the doctor's advice and send me to a severe Eastern climate. California (certain sections of it) might be a good place to come to for a tubercular cure, but for those who were stricken there it was generally fatal to remain, until later cures were discovered.

My grandfather had written to a brother-in-law who lived in Illinois to meet me in Chicago and take me to Lexington. Almost immediately after I left the train it moved off to another station and I looked about for some one resembling my handsome courtly grandfather.

The only person on the platform was a long lanky old farmer, glancing about vaguely, and eating a bunch of grapes. A horrid presentiment assailed me and I was thankful the train had gone. Yes, it was he, my grand-uncle-in-law, who had drifted West from New York long since and

been a farmer for something like forty years. I hated the sight of him and I don't think he liked me any better, but he took me to dinner at one of the large hotels, where, with the snobbishness of youth, I was mortally ashamed of him. Thence he shepherded me to Kentucky. My aunt met me at the train, and there, I think, she had her first foreboding. I arrived without a hat! It had blown off, I suppose, but I had not noticed its absence. However, she welcomed me cordially, and we drove out to her place in a 'carryall,' the like of which I had never seen. I was received with consuming interest by my cousins, for California was the land of romance; although I think they were disappointed that I was not hung with gold and jewels.

It was a nice old place, with fine trees and an orchard, the house rambling and comfortable, and I liked my cousins, Tom, Frank, and Sarah. There were two small children who slept, to my amusement, in a trundle-bed under the marital four-poster, but of them I have only a dim memory. They died before they were grown, of tuberculosis, a curse that seemed to hang over the house of Franklin. My grandfather and I had narrow escapes, but after the first snowfall my lungs were quite restored.

I don't think that my uncle, a silent dignified man, ever liked me, particularly after, in a fit of temper, I called him an old bigot when he refused to take me to the theatre. Both he and his wife were profoundly religious and were scandalized when I went on to inform them that if my grandfather had inherited any such idiotic prejudices he had long since shed them in the beneficent climate of California. I had gone to the theatre 'all my life.' I had attended dancing-school (Dancing! One of the Deadly Sins. Brother Stephen had certainly degenerated). And I had been permitted to read novels on Sunday! But I found congenial spirits in my cousins, who were in a constant state of rebellion; their Sabbaths, after Sunday School, church and a

heavy midday dinner, were spent under their father's stern eye studying the catechism and the Bible, and they were sent to bed at seven. On week days they had tasks after school to keep them out of mischief. My aunt I liked despite her stern morals and sarcastic tongue, for she was very kind to me and one of the most quick-witted women I have ever known.

Lexington was a small city of some thirty thousand inhabitants, with one hotel, poor shops, and many large houses in gardens but quite without pretence. The people were most hospitable and whenever you 'dropped in,' even were it during the early morning hours, would offer you a mint julep. All the acquaintances I made revolved about the Presbyterian Church. Methodist and Baptist Churches flourished, but were a shade lower in the social scale. Roman Catholics were candidates for hell fire. While I was there an extremely pretty girl moved to Lexington with her family, but she was a Papist and Society would as readily have admitted a rattlesnake to its sacred preserve. My aunt pointed her out to me in a hushed whisper. One young man who succumbed to her charms was promptly ostracized. No doubt such bigoted communities still exist, judging from the recent expulsion of a college professor who upheld the doctrine of evolution. A good subject for Irvin Cobb, who has written so many brilliant studies of Kentucky equally benighted in the 'seventies.

### X I I I

'SAYRE,' standing in several acres of ground, was a large brick building, innocent of plumbing, but with long sheltered verandas, where the pupils could exercise in stormy weather. There I was installed a few days after my arrival, and startled the wife of the president, Major McClellan,



by informing her that her brother, 'Billy' Matthews (a dignified Judge), proposed to my mother regularly once a year. I think she too had her doubts.

I gave them some trouble, but not a great deal, for I studied hard, in my ambition to outshine my classmates, and receive a rare word of commendation from my grandfather. The only misdemeanour I can recall was kicking my desk-mate off the seat into the aisle because she persisted in chewing gum.

But I gave my aunt, with whom I spent my week-ends and holidays, trouble enough. I had inherited none of the Franklin tidiness. My hair was always wild, my clothes on the floor. Nor would I mend my garments, although I made a bargain with one of the girls at school whereby she sewed the buttons on my boots and I wrote her compositions.

My aunt was deeply concerned when I announced myself an 'agnostic' (I had but the vaguest idea of the word's meaning), not only on my own account but because she feared I would contaminate her children, although, had she but known it, they hated Sunday 'like poison,' and played cards (another D.S.) in the barn. Boys and girls have changed little with the years, but parents have grown wiser. Still, there were no ultimate ills from this strict and unimaginative bringing-up of my cousins. Frank ran away from home when he was seventeen or eighteen and roughed it in the West for some years. He returned, however, to study law, and became not only the leading judge in Lexington but a political boss. An honest one, however, for there was no money to steal. But he built a new and handsome court-house and turned the 'pikes' into admirable roads. Tom studied medicine, and, under the family threat of tuberculosis, practised in Texas for some years before returning to his native city. Sarah married a clergyman.

The stern principles of my uncle extended to politics.

His place was just outside the limits of Fayette County, which made him a resident of the county adjoining. Its 'seat' was ten miles away and there he must go to cast his vote. One morning, very early, I was awakened by giggling in the hall. I ran out and saw my cousins standing at the windows in their nightgowns, convulsed with laughter. No wonder! My uncle, a big heavy man, was ambling off in the dusky dawn on a horse a size too small for him (his feet almost touched the ground), hanging on to the pommel of the saddle, and looking like a caricature of Sancho Panza.

Frank explained. If that patriotic citizen, Major Robert Bullock, covered the distance comfortably in his carryall, his negro driver would vote the Republican ticket and nullify his own. This performance, his offspring told me, was repeated at every important election, although he suffered acute discomfort for a week thereafter. Ten miles there and ten back! Even my grandfather, the most conscientious of men, laughed when I told him. But he, despite Calvinism, had the saving grace of humour.

My aunt's other concerns for both my present and future welfare were as nothing when beaux began to accumulate. Even the young men went to church, and I met them at 'sociables' or at the houses of day scholars. One of them bore the august name of Henry Clay, but he found no favour in my aunt's anxious eyes. She was responsible to my grandfather and feared I would take it into my disorderly head to elope with one of these young men who began to haunt the house. She barely let me out of her sight until she returned me, with an audible sigh of thanksgiving, to Sayre and the stern eye of Major McClellan.

But although I flirted shamelessly with several of them nothing was further from my thoughts than marriage. I wanted to be a 'belle' as my mother had been, and these rather mild young men were good material for practice.

There was one very beautiful estate in the neighbourhood

of my uncle's house – 'Ashlands,' the old home of Henry Clay. Years later, my cousin Tom married his granddaughter and made it his own home. The Kinkaid's also had a fine estate, so covered with oaks that it looked like an English park. There may have been others but I do not recall them. Most of those places were hardly more pretentious than my uncle's. But all seemed to live well. Negro servants abounded, and in summer one always waved a long feather duster over our heads during meals to keep the flies off. I never see *Aida* without being transported to my aunt's dining-room and drifting back for a moment to my insurgent and heedless youth.

#### X I V

ALL my early experiences seem to have been of short duration. As the end of the year approached Aunt Mary wrote to my grandfather that she would be responsible for me no longer and he sent for me to come home. She accompanied me as far as Chicago where a friend of his, whose name I have forgotten, was to escort me across the continent. Said she, as she kissed me good-bye: 'You have your points, Gertrude, and I can't help liking you, but I am free to say that I was never so glad to see the last of any one in my life. I think you are headed straight for the devil, but I shall pray for you.'

'I am engaged to only two of them,' I replied from the top step. 'And I've no intention of marrying either.'

She was still shaking her head as the train moved off.

I went home to a tragedy that touched my life very closely

In the early morning of the last day of the journey, as I was gazing, half awake, at the magnificent ridges of the high Sierras, covered with redwood forests and glittering

snow, a newsboy burst into the train and roared: 'Failure of the Bank of California and suicide of William C. Ralston!' Immediate hubbub in the car. Men, regardless of their scant attire, flung the curtains of their berths aside and sprang out into the aisle to snatch the newspapers. As all men wore 'night-shirts' in those days, they displayed every variety of leg, each uglier than the other.

But they were not feeling humorous! Some cursed freely. Others were almost hysterical. A few, of course, exclaimed: 'I knew it! It was bound to happen.'

I felt as if the bottom of the universe had dropped out, for to me the Bank of California – that handsome building of green granite where I had so often called on my grandfather, and knew all the clerks by name – had symbolized the world itself, and Mr. Ralston was its king. For nearly a quarter of a century he had been the guiding spirit of the city, a man of bold initiative and swift decisions, to whom all the major projects of the city were submitted. After he became president of the bank his power had increased and all the notable buildings and enterprises came into being at his command. The Bank of California was allied with the Rothschilds in London, and Mr. Ralston's personal fame spread to Europe. Not an important man in those days visited California but brought letters to him, and he entertained all of them royally at his beautiful country place in Belmont 'down the peninsula.' But, alas, he had improved the city with the capital of the bank, and when, at a crucial moment, a rival bank called in its loans, there was a financial earthquake such as California never had before nor since.

But Mr. Ralston! He should have risen, omnipotent, above any disaster. I think it was then that my inherited belief in the infallibility of the male received its first jar. (I had looked upon Mr. Uhlhorn merely as a nuisance and a calamity and no exponent of his sex.) If I had heard that

Stephen Franklin had wrecked the bank through defalcations I hardly could have been more bewildered.

And my own hopes were shattered. I had had visions of my grandfather's friends 'bringing me out' and giving me a 'grand time.' Whether they ignored my mother or not would have been a matter of indifference to me. All youth is selfish, but I doubt if any one more selfish, callous, and heartless ever lived than I was at that time.

Moreover, my mother and I had been antagonistic for years. Alike in some things, we were poles apart in others. I had resented her blind devotion to a man I instinctively knew was a thoroughly bad lot, and her supineness later on. To fight for what I wanted was as natural to me as to accept the gifts the gods provided as my right, and I made no allowance for a character that had not an atom of fight in it. It took me years to learn that character is fate and that no one can be made over.

Why she was often irritated beyond endurance with me will place no strain on the imagination of the reader.

I had been mystified to hear before leaving Kentucky that my mother was living on The Ranch, for she had always vowed she would never set foot on it again. No explanation was forthcoming at the time but I learned later that my grandfather had foreseen the disaster and recognized the necessity for further economy. My Uncle John and his family were living in San José.

I suppose my escort must have received a telegram from my grandfather and taken me across the city and put me on a Southern Pacific train, but I have no recollection of it. The next incident I recall is being met by my mother at the station in San José.

Her first question was: 'Do I look any older?' I said 'No' impatiently and asked for my grandfather. It was impossible for him to leave San Francisco at present, I was told; he was in a terrible state of mind over the failure of

the bank and the death of Mr. Ralston, and would not be down until after the funeral. Mr. Ralston had swum out into the ocean and gone under, but his body had been recovered.

She led the way to a small open carriage and I saw a young man on the box who assuredly was not a coachman. Then he turned and lifted his hat and I recognized George Atherton. He had been hanging round my mother before I left for Kentucky, but if I had thought about him at all it was to dislike him. In fact I had disliked all my mother's admirers, and this was due, no doubt, to subconscious jealousy. She had far more than I, who was a skinny young thing with a general appearance of being washed out. Beside her ripe beauty I looked like a rag. Now, I was somewhat improved, but by no means a Circe.

'What is *he* doing here?' I demanded.

My mother implored me to lower my voice, and to treat him 'decently.' 'Poor George' had quarrelled with his family, and my grandfather had invited him to stay on The Ranch until he found something to do. I therefore gave him an ungracious nod and took my seat.

Two days later I went to San Francisco with my mother to attend Mr. Ralston's funeral. It was the largest and most imposing ever seen in San Francisco, and it retained that distinction until the death of the late James D. Phelan. All the city turned out to behold it, and the streets leading to the church, save one kept open by the police for the funeral *cortège*, were impassable. People hung from every window and the roofs were black with silent figures. My grandfather walked alone behind the hearse. His head was bowed and he looked as if he had lost his last friend on earth. Behind him marched, four abreast, all the important men of the city and the employees of the bank. Then, mounted militia, mounted 'companies' of all sorts; and finally an endless procession of carriages to move at snail's

pace to Lone Mountain on the outer western edge of the city. Preceding the hearse several bands played the Dead March in Saul.

For some reason my mother declined to go to the cemetery, and we took the afternoon train for San José.

## X V

LIFE on The Ranch was vastly different from what it had been in my childhood. The house had been rebuilt and had a charming living-room and a glass-enclosed veranda. The garden was well kept and there were many flowering shrubs among the massive oaks and sycamores. But there were no more buggies under the trees. A railroad had been built some six years before to carry passengers between San Francisco and San José. California itself was now connected with the eastern seaboard by both rail and telegraph. No longer was San Francisco a half-mythical outpost on the Pacific but a city as well known to the rest of the world as Bret Harte's mining-camps, and growing wealthier and more important every day. Her magnificent Bay was no longer lively with trading ships from New York and Boston as well as from the Orient. Freight hurtled across prairies and mountains, ever increasing in volume. Even the tourist had discovered California.

And what changes in the appearance of San Francisco itself! The 'seventies bore but a fugitive resemblance to the 'sixties. Mr. Ralston had built the Palace Hotel, whose court was 'the largest of any hotel in the world.' Handsomer shops, hotels, restaurants and office buildings were on Kearney and Montgomery Streets. Van Ness Avenue, second only to Market Street in width, had been cut from north to south, and beyond it instead of sand hills was the Western Addition, where more and more 'rows' and more

private houses of awful architecture offended the landscape. Cable cars glided up and down the steep hills, and the Haggins, Tevises, Bournes, Tobins, and Coltons had entrenched themselves on 'Nob Hill,' dominating the city in wealth, fashion, and exclusiveness. Later on three of the enterprising men who built the Central Pacific Railroad, Leland Stanford, Charles Crocker, and Mark Hopkins, built huge and hideous mansions on Nob Hill, but, like the others, they were wooden structures and were swept away by the fire of 1906. The constant menace of earthquakes made them fearful of employing brick or stone, and reinforced concrete was not in use.

My grandfather paid us flying visits, but the bank was being reorganized with fresh capital, and he had little time for anything but work.

I learned at once that the cause of George Atherton's quarrel with his family was his wish to marry my mother. Not only was she fourteen years older than he – he was twenty-four – but she was a divorcée, and had long been unknown to Society. The Athertons were Catholics, prided themselves upon being the most exclusive family in California, and were frigid in their social morals.

But she was determined to marry him and he her – when he 'got something to do.' My grandfather was amiably disposed but had no intention of supporting a son-in-law. As far as I could see he never left The Ranch save to drive his host to and from the train. But I must say this for him; he made himself useful about the place. He had no initiative, but a good deal of the energy of youth.

There was some reason for this late infatuation of my mother's, for he was handsome and magnetic, he had fine manners, and he talked a good deal, although he never said anything.

He possessed no charm for me, and I saw little to admire.



in his conventional beauty with its oval face, pouting mouth under a 'tawny moustache,' broad black eyebrows set in a forehead that looked intellectual and was not. He was no ideal of mine, for of course I had an ideal. What it was I cannot remember, and I doubt if I knew then. And if the ideal man exists he is beyond the range of a fairly wide experience.

I think that Rose was more contented than any of us at being 'buried on The Ranch.' My sister Aleece had a 'hole in her lungs,' and Rose believed the country air would mend it. I shall always remember the distressing picture that child made – she was then nine – standing for an hour at a time in one spot in the garden, her large mournful blue eyes under their heavy black brows staring out at nothing, her pinched face yellow until it met the deep black circles under her eyes. The San Francisco doctors had given her up, and my mother had lost all hope, but one day a caller told her of a Doctor Thorne who had great success with children, and she sent for him at once. He put Aleece on a diet of Pale Ale and it worked like magic. Three years later when I met her again after the reconciliation with my family she was a fine healthy girl with a complexion of ivory and rose.

With the adaptability of youth I soon forgot my disappointments and once more was consumed with the desire to be 'well-read.' This pleased my grandfather, who merely gave me a mild scolding for the trouble I had given Aunt Mary. He thought it time to interest me in poetry – he had little use for my earlier favourites, Bryant and Longfellow – and, when he was able to come down regularly at week-ends, read aloud to me from Chaucer, Shelley and Shakespeare, as well as carefully selected extracts from *Childe Harold* and *Don Juan*. Of course I soon discovered how adroitly he was winnowing, and immediately read those poems from beginning to end. I still have that copy of Byron, 'Published by

Henry Adams, and sold by John Briggs in Philadelphia in 1831.' It is the only book of my grandfather's that I possess, for at his death my mother presented his library to the Theological Seminary, of which he was one of the founders.

It was then too that he talked to me of Alexander Hamilton, whom he admired more than any man in American history, and so planted the long germinating seed of *The Conqueror*; not to be written until 1901. But I shared his enthusiasm even then, and the first time I went to New York I let but a few days pass before visiting the remains of the thirteen trees Hamilton had planted about his house in Harlem, and the scene of the duel at Weehawken.

## XVI

It was a dull winter. We were shut in the house most of the time owing to the heavy rains. Nowhere can it rain harder and with a more tiresome persistence than in California during the brief season when it rains at all.

I had returned in August. It was some time during the winter that it began to dawn upon my immature but always feminine consciousness that George Atherton was trying to make love to me. It was the old story of youth calling to youth against the declining charms of middle-age. Not that he called to me. His expressive eyes and signs, his muttered endearments, merely irritated me, and I shut myself up in the library, and trained my dog to growl at him if he ventured over the threshold. Of course this only served to inflame him, for he was mere male – just that and nothing more.

He had proposed to me five times. I had either ignored or insulted him. But for once and once only in his life he developed a persistence worthy of a better cause. I was mortally afraid my mother would discover what he was up to and I hated rows unless I made them myself.

I was sitting in the library one afternoon reading the *Phaedo* of Plato. That I understood little of it and appreciated it not at all mattered nothing; I was determined to be well read. I looked up with a scowl as he entered, in the mood, I could see, to propose for the sixth time, and quite impervious to the growling of the dog. I lowered my eyes ostentatiously to the book and turned my back.

But he was not to be daunted. He talked and talked and talked. Finally Destiny answered for me, as I shrugged my shoulders: 'Oh, well, I don't care. One has to marry some time, I suppose. But do leave me in peace. I prefer Plato.'

I gave the matter no further thought, not for a moment supposing he had taken my ungracious words seriously, although I did wonder once or twice why I had uttered them.

But he had; moreover, again for once in his life, he was clever. He practically turned me round and married me.

On the following afternoon I drove with him, as was my habit on Saturdays, into San José to meet my grandfather. We started somewhat earlier than usual, as he said the horse had to be shod. When we were about a mile from The Ranch he informed me that he had the licence in his pocket and we were to be married in the priests' house of the Jesuit order; as I was not a Catholic the church was denied us, but he must be married by a priest or his family would never forgive him.

For a moment I was dumbfounded, then furious, and threatened to jump out of the carriage. He whipped up the horse. I began to feel dazzled. Surely this was romance and drama. And the love of change, of variety, had been born in me, fostered by the rapidly shifting scenes of my crowded eighteen years. I felt like the heroine of a novel. And I wanted to wear trains and the little fancy evening caps then in vogue with married women. And where was I to meet another man, isolated on The Ranch? I might wilt away into spinsterhood, always a burden on my grandfather. I

should like to be able to say that I hesitated on account of my mother, but, despite the high principles inculcated by my grandfather, I gave her not a thought. The truth of the matter is that I was over-developed mentally and in character had hardly progressed beyond that of a well-grown child, whose instinct it is to reach out and take what it wants. That I was about to commit a scoundrelly act never occurred to me; and if the old adage 'marry in haste and repent at leisure' had risen in my mind it would have been but an added incentive to run counter to the teachings of wisdom. Certainly once more I was about to do something different.

We were married briefly in the priests' house adjoining the church. The ceremony was performed by Father Varsi, the handsomest and most interesting priest I have ever met. He was a Roman prince and looked more like one than any I have seen in Italy since. In after years he used to try to convert me, while I informed him that he was a loss to the world.

We always stopped at the post office for the mail, and it was agreed that George should receive a letter from his father demanding his presence at once on important business. He was to leave that night to break the news to his family, while I remained behind to face the music.

It was possible that it would take a week to talk the family over, as they had long since picked out a girl for him, a nice domestic girl of their exclusive set, with a tidy little fortune. I made up my mind to keep the secret from my own family until the last possible moment; there was nothing to be gained by a week of acute discomfort. I did tell Rose, however, and she uncorked the vials of her wrath. She called me every name under the sun, and lamented that I was too old to be spanked. But she made no impression on me. I was feeling cynical and worldly and Ouidaish, and I was about to go forth and enter upon a new and glamorous life. My mother suspected nothing, and Rose would have

been the last to break the news to her, even if I had not sworn her to secrecy.

I received a letter from George saying that it was 'all right' and I was to leave on the following Monday. I planned to tell my grandfather and mother on Sunday night. Then I could go to bed and leave early the next day.

But the fates willed otherwise. My mother had a headache on Saturday and did not come down to dinner. Suddenly my grandfather turned to me with a twinkle in his eyes and said: 'I heard an amusing piece of gossip on the train to-day – that you and George Atherton were married. I suppose, as you are young and pretty, and he is young and handsome, rumours of the kind are inevitable.'

I felt as if a bomb had exploded, but concluded rapidly that nothing would be gained by delaying the inevitable moment – and be called a liar later on. I had intended to wait until after dinner on Sunday, recalling the philosophy of my mother and her friends of the wisdom of 'feeding the brute first'; then I would sit on his lap and cajole him. Alas, no! I felt myself turning very red, but I looked him in the eye and said calmly: 'Well, it is true. We were married a week ago to-day and I am going to town to meet him on Monday.'

The twinkle vanished from his eyes. They looked like blue agates, and his face turned white. There was a legend in the family that he had a 'terrible temper' but never lost control of it. I thought it was about to break loose for once, and braced myself. But he merely continued to stare at me for a moment, his lips set in a thin grey line. Then he left the table abruptly and went upstairs to my mother's room. He closed her door behind him and for two hours I heard the murmur of low voices.

Rose, who had been eavesdropping, entered as he left. I was feeling somewhat frightened, but if I expected sympathy from her I was disappointed. 'Do you think he will turn

me out of the house to-night?" I asked, recalling harrowing tales I had read. 'I've no place to go.'

'Serve you right if he did,' she said, clearing the table. 'You'll get a good tongue-lashing anyhow. And you've spoilt his dinner! I'll keep it hot, but I guess he hasn't got much appetite left.' She went off muttering, 'How will she take it? How will she take it?'

I roamed about the lower part of the house, too uneasy to sit still, wondering what the coming interview would be like. I was determined not to say I was sorry, for I was not. Nor, no matter how he scolded me, would I 'break.' It was a deep-lying instinct in my nature never to show any emotion, much less any softness; possibly inborn, possibly the result of reading too many English novels. It is hard to decide at this distance of time, but as I heard him coming down the stairs I held up my head and looked as haughty as I knew how. Doubtless I appeared to him merely defiant and extremely silly.

He paused at the foot of the stair, which ascended directly from the living-room. 'I have little to say to you,' he began in a voice I had never heard before; it was as cold as my Aunt Mary's ice-house and cut like the flicking of a sword. 'You have been ungrateful to me and have acted disgracefully toward your mother. There was no reason for secrecy. I never knew you to do anything underhand or cowardly before, and no words can express my disappointment in you. As for that young man — whether he will make you happy or not remains to be seen. I do not think, however,' he added harshly, 'that you will have any trouble with his family. They will be so relieved that he has married a raw girl instead of a woman many years older than himself, they will no doubt receive you with open arms! You belong to them now. I am obliged to return to the city to-morrow afternoon. Kindly keep out of my way meanwhile. It will be some time before I shall wish to see you again.'

And he went to his room. I went to mine. It was three years before I saw either him or my mother again. Rose brought my meals to my room and helped me to pack.

In spite of my grandfather's cold and justifiable wrath I think he was secretly relieved. He had made no opposition to my mother's engagement to a man so many years her junior, because he never could refuse a woman anything. Moreover, he had sympathized deeply with her in her many misfortunes, and if life at this late day offered her any sort of compensation, he would not be the one to deny her. And he deeply resented the attitude of the Athertons. Far better men than this second-rate offspring of theirs had wanted to marry my mother. But he knew they would never receive her, and was thankful she would now be spared further humiliations.

He was too angry with me at the time to worry about my future. Or possibly he reflected that it might have been worse. At least I was marrying into a good family, and would be well taken care of, should anything happen to himself.

## BOOK II

### I

**M**Y father-in-law, Faxon Dean Atherton, lived at his country place, covering a square mile, some thirty miles 'down the peninsula' from San Francisco, and between the village of Menlo Park and the station Fair Oaks – afterwards renamed Atherton in memory of him. It was at least two-thirds covered with magnificent woods, left in their natural state save for roads cut through the heavy underbrush.

Born in Dedham, Massachusetts, of unmixed English descent, Mr. Atherton, in his early youth, had adventured as far as Chile in search of fortune. He made it in hardware. Not long after his arrival he married Dominga de Gofñi, whose parents had fled from Spain in some political revolution, and six of his children, Alejandra, Frank, Elena, George, Isabel, and Faxon, were born in Valparaiso; the youngest, Florence, in San Francisco, whither he came with his family some time during the 'sixties. They lived on Rincon Hill until Mr. Atherton bought the country estate from the widow of Louis Argüello, the first Mexican Governor of California, and built a large comfortable house with two bath-rooms – few houses boasted more than one – and a wing for the servants. It was adequately but plainly furnished and a fair sample of the country houses of that time. With but one exception that I know of, only those of recent and sudden fortunes were disposed to magnificence, and were scornfully criticized by the old regime. Style of any sort in the country was bad style. The place had been known familiarly as 'Los Pulgas' (the fleas), but was rechristened more euphemistically (not more fittingly), Valparaiso Park.

The house stood in a clearing of the middle woods about



half a mile from the entrance gates. There were fine lawns before it and the gardens were rich with imported flowers and ornamental trees; the only flowers indigenous to Central California were sweet-brier, the golden poppy (now hideously known as *eschscholtzia*), bluebells, wood violets, 'baby-eyes,' yellow and purple lupins – which grew everywhere, even on the sand-hills of San Francisco. But in Mr. Atherton's garden, as in many others, were every variety of rose, fuchsia, mignonette, morning glory, heliotrope, tulips, as well as magnolia trees, orange trees, bridal wreath, lilac and syringa. About the house was a continuous bed of Parma violets whose fragrance greeted one when passing the deer park. (The deer generally died, homesick for their redwood forests on the mountains.)

Mr. Atherton, with the true instinct of the patriarch, had intended to build a house on the estate for each of his children as they married. But at the time of my advent only one had risen. Alejandra Atherton, after a long reign as a belle, was now the wife of a New Yorker, Major Lawrence Rathbone, and lived on the south-east corner of the property in a very modern and beautiful house – designed by herself – but still carefully avoiding the palatial. Elena, now Mrs. Macondray, preferred to live in the city and had a house in the Western Addition. Isabel was married in Chile, to one of the Edwards, of banking fame. Of the boys only George had married, and Florence was still a schoolgirl.

I seemed fated to have strong silent men presiding over my immediate destinies. Mr. Atherton rarely opened his mouth. He was a handsome old man with regular features, a short grey beard but shaven upper lip, and was taller than any of his sons. I remember him as always kind in an absent manner, but, although I suppose he did talk sometimes, I cannot recall a word that he may have uttered.\*

\* Mr. Atherton had been in indifferent health for some time, but I was told that for years he corresponded with Daniel Webster, Louis Agassiz,

Mrs. Atherton was exactly five feet in height and weighed two hundred pounds. Perhaps it was her breadth and width that made her impressive, or her enormous Spanish dignity that diverted attention from her negligible inches. Her skin was fair – she was very proud of her Castilian blood – but her hair had been a dark auburn-brown. Her features were undistinguished; fortunately all her children inherited, in varying length of nose, the regular features of their father. Her English was very broken, but she cherished the delusion that she had mastered the tongue of her husband. Frank and George were rather dark, but Faxon and Elena had reasonably fair skins, blue eyes and brown hair. Alejandra had the most magnificent blue eyes I have ever seen – Spanish eyes despite their colour. Set in an olive skin they were all the more striking. She was still a beautiful woman, notwithstanding the hundred and eighty pounds she had prematurely accumulated; her height carried them off. Florence, then fifteen, had a brilliant complexion, dazzling teeth, brown hair with golden glints in it, and the long dark green eyes – *los ojos verdes* – famed in Spanish song. But she was then as thin as I was, which afforded me much satisfaction. My grandfather knew his world. They did not receive me with open arms, for no less demonstrative people ever lived, but they were philosophical, and they had escaped a great calamity; they were extremely ‘nice’ to me, and I was given to understand immediately that I now had the honour of being one of them.

I do not think I have ever met a family so completely satisfied with themselves, with their condition, with life itself, as the Athertons. They were well born, well bred, had always known wealth – as wealth went in those days; they prided themselves upon having the shortest visiting list in

Secretary Seward, and other distinguished men, many of whom had been entertained at Valparaiso Park. There were several trunks full of these letters in the attic at the time of his death. They probably had a certain value, but unfortunately Mrs. Atherton destroyed them.

San Francisco, and what they did or had or were was of an indisputable rightness. Everything else suffered by comparison. As none of her children was a pure blonde, Mrs. Atherton lamented my surface accessories, but consoled me with the hope that my hair would grow darker with the years, and, possibly, my skin also. As none of them cared for reading I was given to understand that reading was not the thing. Neither was impulsiveness, and Mrs. Atherton conceived it to be her holy mission to tone me down. She read me little abstract lectures, priding herself upon her subtlety. Intellect had no place in woman. Her whole duty was to be a good wife, mother, and housekeeper. If called to social position she must be careful to set a good example. I soon learned to listen amiably and think about something else.

I fancy she had hopes of making a true Atherton out of me, and I sometimes wonder she did not. I was very young, unformed in character, and it is extraordinary how the collective pressure of the religiously average can almost convince any one subject to pangs of originality that they are right and he wrong. It is the bourgeois standard, of course, but one that has invaded all aristocracies – to say nothing of royalties. At certain of the older courts of Europe no one can be officially presented who has ever received money for a more or less corresponding value. That, of course, excludes artists of all denominations, even were one a Sophocles or a Velazquez. The attitude of my new family was precisely similar. Gentlemen engaged in business or followed one of the professions; but writers and painters, sculptors or musicians, were beyond the pale, not only in Menlo Park but in San Francisco generally, as no scion of a leading family had then taken to any of the arts. Therefore, necessarily, artists were common.

My mother-in-law had an even higher standard. 'Ladies in Spain do not write,' she said to me when I began to betray symptoms; and it was quite twelve years after I

published my first novel before the painful subject that I wrote at all was mentioned by any of the family in my presence, although I was generally upon good terms with them. (Mrs. Rathbone was an exception, but that comes later.) I dedicated one of my first little books to Mrs. Atherton, and she thanked me politely and never referred to it again. I think she felt she had been visited with an undeserved notoriety.

## I I

I HAD no companions of my own age. Alejandra and Elena were but a few years younger than my mother. Florence was either away at school or had her intimate friends, Lizzie and Manuela Page, with her during the holidays. (Seas and peaks between fifteen and eighteen!) George, who was never any sort of companion, went to town every day with his father, who had set him up in the brokerage business.

It seems to me, looking back, that I must have reverted to my childhood for a year or two, although I had thought myself extremely grown-up and worldly-wise before. But then I had always been among people who more or less spoilt me, and encouraged my mental aspirations. It was not in the Atherton credo to spoil anyone, although they regarded me as little more than an infant. 'So child!' my mother-in-law would exclaim despairingly. She was horrified that I could not sew, and tried to teach me to embroider flannel petticoats for the impending Atherton, over which unknown quantity she was pleasurably excited. It would be the first child to inherit the name, and she insisted that it be born in the family mansion; our own house was building, but it would hardly be finished in time, and I doubt if I should have been permitted to move in if it had been.

Possibly my condition had something to do with my reverision. It is too much to say that I resented it, for I thought

little about it. Babies, it seemed, opened the second chapter of the book of marriage, but it added to my bewilderment. I was thoroughly disoriented, and as there were no books to read in the house, my mind went to sleep. I forgot I had ever posed as intellectual, desired to be well read. Above all, to be different.

Well that it was so. To be different in that environment would have been a social offence.

Mrs. Macondray and her brood spent the summer at the 'Big House.' Mrs. Rathbone came over every afternoon. Neighbours dropped in. They sat on the wide veranda, sewing, embroidering, exchanging recipes, gossiping. I often wondered if life anywhere else in the whole wide world were as dull. Mrs. Atherton soon gave up trying to make a needlewoman out of me, so I merely sat among them, stifling yawns and listening vaguely. I had gone through many vicissitudes in my short life, but dullness had not been one of their attributes. By contrast they seemed highly dramatic. I doubt if any of my new friends would have recognized drama off the stage had it been paraded in front of her. But there was no prospect of drama here.

The meals were endless. Eight or ten courses. And conversation, unless there was company present, was entirely in Spanish, which I thought rather rude as I could not understand a word of it. Unfortunately this gave me a dislike for the language and I missed a great opportunity.

It is only just that a word should be said in regard to Mrs. Atherton's 'table,' for it was famous – among those invited to Valparaiso Park – as the best table in California. Her Chinese cook had come to her unexcelled in the usual American repertoire; she sent him to cook for three months in one of San Francisco's renowned French restaurants, and then herself taught him the dishes of her native Chile. It was the last that made her table famous, but I really liked only one of them: large green peppers, the outer skin par-

boiled off, the seeds removed, and then filled with cheese and fried in batter, the whole covered with browned cream. It was a dish to appeal to any palate, but I hated all the others at the time and the cook hated me because he was obliged to prepare my food in the simplest possible manner. On one occasion when I went out to the kitchen to take him a message from Mrs. Atherton he threw an iron saucepan at my head and missed me by an inch. I made a lively exit, but had sense enough to keep the adventure to myself.

If there was no drama in Menlo Park, sometimes there were mild sensations. Whether it was during that first summer or later – I spent many afternoons of my married life on that veranda – I have forgotten, but one topic of discussion was the impertinent invasion of Menlo Park – a term that embraced all that part of the county – by one of the Bonanza millionaires. For many years two men named Flood and O'Brien had kept a saloon in San Francisco. Then came the excitement of the Virginia City mines; they speculated and made millions. O'Brien preferred to live in the city, but Flood built himself a colossal white house on the Middlefield road, not far from the Rathbones, and contiguous to the estates of other members of the ancient aristocracy. It looked more like a house on a wedding cake than something to live in, and was uglier than anything in San Francisco. The county was both annoyed and agitated, and for weeks the leading topic on the veranda was whether or not the Floods should be called upon when they moved in. However, for business reasons, impressed upon them by their husbands, the women did call, and Mrs. Rathbone left her mother's card with her own.

I was present when they returned the call, and was stricken too dumb to take any part in the conversation. As this call marked their formal entrance into Menlo Park society, they had got themselves up for the occasion. Mrs. Flood wore a flowing dark blue silk wrapper, discreetly

ruffled, and 'Miss Jennie' a confection of turquoise-green flannel trimmed with deep flounces of Valenciennes lace! We always wore the simplest of thin frocks in summer – generally white batiste or cross-barred muslin – but I doubt if we, in our ostentatious simplicities, made the initiates feel out of it. I fancy they went away after that stiff and nervous call with the pleasant feeling of superiority that only multi-millions can give.

An even more amusing episode had occurred several years before. Milton S. Latham had married the most beautiful of the 'three Macs,' Mollie McMullen, a lovely brunette, with large soft dark eyes, delicate features, and an expression of such sweetness that she retained much of her beauty and a semblance of youth when I last saw her at the age of seventy. Both were of the old regime, but she had been poor all her life and now wanted all that money could buy, including two trousseaux a year from Paris and a fine house. As he was many years older than she was he gratified her every whim. Although, as I have said, simplicity was *de rigueur* in the country, his house in Menlo Park was large and imposing, but in perfect taste. It was furnished magnificently and he had a chef, an English butler, a host of other servants, a vintage cellar, and entertained on the grand scale.

The Duke of Manchester was making a tour round the world and passed through California. He brought a letter to Mr. Latham, who left a card on him at once, at the Palace Hotel, and invited him to spend the following night at his country house. He also invited guests from San Francisco to meet him, as well as Mr. and Mrs. Atherton, the Rathbones, Selbys, and other county fashionables.

The duke arrived by a late train and was taken at once to his room. The company assembled in the great drawing-room, women in Paris gowns and jewels, men in their poor best.

The English butler announced in faltering accents: 'His Grace, the Duke of Manchester.' All turned expectantly to the door. It was the first time any of them had seen a duke and they were agreeably fluttered.

And then the duke strode in, and they nearly fainted. He wore boots that reached his thighs and a red flannel shirt!

No doubt he too nearly fainted when he saw that glittering assemblage of gentlemen and ladies who would not have disgraced his own ancestral halls. Poor man, he was terribly mortified, and explained to his suave and smiling host that all he knew of California he had gleaned from the stories of Bret Harte, and had provided himself with what he believed to be the regulation Western costume, that all whom he met might feel quite at their ease! True, he had had misgivings when he saw the splendour of the house, but he had brought no other change and had hoped against hope that all would be right.

The company had recovered before he finished his embarrassed apology and concluded to take the matter as a huge joke, putting him at his ease at once. I believe that never a more successful dinner was given in Menlo Park. The duke invited them all to visit him in England and went on his way delighted with Californians.

### I I I

EVEN more than at the absence of any domestic traits in my composition was Mrs. Atherton disturbed by the fact that I had never been baptized. I must infer that baptism is of little import to Presbyterians, for my sisters had not undergone the ceremony either, and I never heard my grandfather mention the subject. But it is of paramount importance in the Catholic Church.

'So terreebly thing you never been baptize,' exclaimed Mrs. Atherton, when, from some remark I let fall, she real-



ized the horrid truth. 'You mus' be baptize now. Si the mother no is baptize and the baby die its soul go to Limbo and stay there alway. I send for the priest to-morrow to instruct you.'

She was a tyrannical old lady despite her kindness, and I had learned that the easiest method of getting along with her was to let her have her own way. It was a matter of entire indifference to me whether I was baptized or not, and I was interested in one church as little as in another. 'Very well, Señora,' (my own compromise) I said. 'It's all the same to me.'

Accordingly, the priest – a jolly Irishman – came three times a week, and enjoyed a good lunch and a long gossip with my mother-in-law. He gave me a catechism to study. I never opened it. He asked a perfunctory question occasionally, and paid little attention to my mumbled replies. At the end of a month he pronounced me ready for the ceremony, and one afternoon I drove over to the little parish church in Menlo Park village with Mrs. Atherton and Mrs. Rathbone, who were to be my godmothers. I gave orders to the rest of the family to stay at home and locked the door of the church. But during the ceremony I could hear Lawrence Rathbone and Faxon Atherton giggling at the keyhole every time the priest called me Jertrude; and by that distortion I was inflicted for some time after.

The ceremony was not impressive to me. I was within a month of my confinement and feeling very tired. I stood first on one foot and then on the other. I surreptitiously spat out the salt he placed on my tongue. I tried to think of something interesting while his voice droned on, and I was furious with those two devils at the keyhole. My back began to ache, my head to spin. I became alarmed lest I disgrace myself by fainting and making a scene. But it was over at last, and Mrs. Atherton smiling and satisfied. Two souls had been saved from the burning.

A fortnight later Mr. Atherton was mortally stricken. I believe it was a clot of blood on the brain, caused by the pulling of a tooth, and the doctors pronounced the case hopeless, although he might linger for some time.

Mrs. Atherton never lost her presence of mind, no matter what her grief. His soul must be attended to as well as his body. His mind was clear for a short time after the stroke, and he consented to make confession, although it would be for the first time in thirty years.

Mrs. Atherton issued her orders. All the family must go to confession at the same time. Mrs. Macondray came down from the city. Florence, who was at Mills Seminary in Oakland, was sent for. Mrs. Rathbone had taken up her abode in the house to help with the nursing. The men of the family were manifestly uneasy at the prospect of recalling all their sins and confessing them even to a priest, but when their mother put her foot down they knew it was futile to rebel.

The sitting-room was fitted up as a chapel, and Archbishop Alemany was to come down on Tuesday night.

I was much disturbed. Not because I must confess my sins but because I didn't have any. My baptism had wiped the slate clean. I was a new-born soul. I don't think I have ever been so mortified.

On Tuesday evening all were assembled in the drawing-room to go forth one by one to the confessional. No one spoke. The women were solemn and tearful. The men restless. I remember there was a fire in the redwood forest on the mountain and the pungent odour of smoke drifted in through the open windows.

Some of those confessions were very long! Florence and I, being the youngest, were at the tail of the procession, and as I was determined to be the last (unless I could happily get out of it altogether), I hid behind a chair; after one indignant glance around, she was forced to precede me.

My turn came, however. I walked slowly down the hall until I reached the door of the hastily improvised chapel. I opened it to the width of a crack and peered in. The light was religiously dim. At the far end a small frail figure in the white robes of the Dominican Order knelt before the altar. He looked more like the wraith of a canonized saint than anything living.

I closed the door carefully and advanced with dragging feet and plumped down on a hassock beside him. For a moment there was a dead silence, and then he turned his head and looked at me inquiringly. Such a kind benignant face and I had nothing to give him!

'I'm sorry,' I blurted out, 'but I haven't any sins. I was baptized only two weeks ago.'

'Can't you think of something?' he asked encouragingly. 'Have you committed no venial sin?'

I had no idea what venial meant and told him so. He explained in his gentle 'tired voice and I longed to please him. Suddenly I had a flash of memory. A few days before I had reached to a high shelf for something, a number of heavy sheets had fallen on my head, and I had ejaculated, 'Damn!' I related the incident with gusto. He gave me his blessing, told me to recite three Ave Marias and three Paternosters as penance, and dismissed me. I thanked him warmly, and although my impulse was to skip I curbed it out of the immense respect I felt for him, and crossed the room decorously; reflecting that I had had a new and picturesque experience.

I opened the door. Florence stood there. Her face was very red. 'What is your penance?' she asked in an excited whisper. 'What is yours?' I demanded suspiciously. 'Only six Ave Marias and six Paternosters!' she exclaimed triumphantly. 'And mine is only *three* Ave Marias and *three* Paternosters! You're worse than I am!' I danced up and down with delight. She danced with rage. No doubt we

should have come to blows, but Mrs. Rathbone appeared opportunely and marched us both off to bed.

## I V

DESPITE the heavy burden of sorrow that had descended upon this hitherto fortunate family, there was a quiet rejoicing when I presented it with a boy. I was much petted and pampered, for I had done the right thing. The name of Atherton would go on. Frank had fallen on his head when a child and his mind was weak. Faxon was very wild and might not marry.

I had always been fond of dolls and was much pleased with this live one; but after I had held it upside down I was not permitted to touch the heir of the ages. The monthly nurse remained longer than was common, for the child was very delicate, and, moreover, must be fed from a bottle. A special cow was reserved for his nourishment.

But if not permitted to hold him, at least I could look at him as long as I liked, provided the nurse or one of the family was in the room. Mrs. Van —— (I never knew the rest of her name) had a careless habit of laying him down with his ears folded, and I became haunted by the fear that he would have outstanding ears. She paid no attention to my remonstrances. I had always hated ugliness in any form, and had been deeply gratified that, despite his frailty, he was a really beautiful baby, with a pure white skin, faintly golden hair (what there was of it) and large blue eyes. Should he be disfigured? Not while he had a mother of active resource. And his ears were beginning to 'stick out.' No doubt of it. I laid my plans and watched my chance. Mrs. Van ——, her fears lulled by my good behaviour, left me alone with him one day while she drifted off for a gossip with the chambermaid. I had secreted a bottle of glue and ran for it at once.

Placing the sleeping infant on its back, I made a liberal application behind both ears and then held them down firmly until they adhered as closely to the skull as nature had intended. It was doubtful if the operation would be discovered until the hour of his evening bath; by that time the good work would have been accomplished, and Mrs. Van — so impressed by my solicitude that she would be more careful in the future. Besides, she might not be able to get the glue off for days. I smiled blandly as she entered.

Some time later, however, the child was screaming in agony. All the family, including myself, rushed upstairs. The explanation was not far to seek! He had been unusually restless, and Mrs. Van —, after looking him over for a stray pin, had discovered the glue behind his ears. Instead of softening it with warm water, she had, stupid woman, attempted to remove it with her fingers and skinned the poor infant. He screamed so that he ruptured himself.

Turmoil on the second floor! I was no longer the princess who had formed the proud link in a royal line. I was in dire disgrace. I think my mother-in-law longed to slap me, and after a scalding lecture she refused to speak to me for two days. 'So child!' she exclaimed for perhaps the five hundredth time since she had known me. 'Never you grow up, I suppose. Si that baby die you have keeling him. Why George he no marry a girl of good sense?'

Useless to protest that it was Mrs. Van —'s fault, not mine; and it seemed to me there was no justice in the world.

The child — who had been christened George Goñi — did not die, and shortly after we moved into our own house. Mrs. Van — went with us and remained until Mrs. Rathbone found a nurse of middle-age and wide experience.

The house, set in the heart of the front woods, was very attractive, and I had been more interested in its building than in any other of my matrimonial experiences. Mrs. Rathbone had designed it and attended to all the details. A

woman of many talents, in these days she could have made her mark as an architect, decorator, and even as an artist of the second class, but in those she would have violated her traditions and such an idea never entered her mind.

The living-room, sixteen by twenty-eight feet, occupied the centre of the one-story house and was 'ceiled' with red-wood until it met an arch that supported a glass roof, diffusing a golden glow. The furniture was red, and I had insisted upon a bookcase although there was nothing to put in it. On the right were the dining-room and spare bedroom, and on the other side a long hall out of which opened three bedrooms and two bath-rooms. The room for the Chinese cook was off the back porch near the kitchen.

All the floors were covered with white matting, a present from Elena Macondray, whose husband had a large importing firm allied with the Orient. I used to sit and watch the fleas jumping about on the white surface. The ranch had been well-named by the matter-of-fact Spanish. I may add that it was no breach of decorum to speak of fleas in California, nor even to scratch.

It may be romantic to live in a primeval wood, but I soon discovered there were drawbacks. One day the cook found a snake whipping about in the sink. A scorpion worked his way from the cellar through a crack in the floor of the pantry. The nurse, one evening when reading, turned her head and saw a tarantula walking up the wall. Snakes abounded, and it amused me to cut them in two with an axe. They were harmless, but fat and loathsome to look at and I killed them on the principle that there was now one less snake in the world.

I was very much pleased to be mistress in my own house and felt extremely important. George, knowing I was hopeless, 'kept house,' and time soon began to hang heavily on my hands. I longed for books. The neighbours called in state, and one of them was accompanied by her husband,

John T. Doyle, an old lawyer and friend of my grandfather. I knew he had a library and confided in him. After that he brought me books regularly, and other neighbours lent me novels. Ouida was out of date, and one of the popular novelists was Constance Fenimore Woolson, who, I believe, had been pronounced by the critics immortal. Also, such mild literary lights as Edgar Fawcett, Henry Cuyler Bunner, and Frank Stockton were much extolled. A novel that made an impression on me at the time was *Miss Brown* by Vernon Lee, and it looked for a while as if this really beautiful writer were to have a vogue in America. But she was quickly forgotten, and I do not suppose that her *Louis Norbert*, published in 1913, found a hundred readers. In a population of a hundred and twenty millions it seems odd that even the most intellectual of novelists should be totally neglected.

## V

MR. ATHERTON lingered for several months. Two scenes in connection with his death are indelibly impressed on my memory. In a little room on the left of the main entrance to the house he lay on a cot for a few hours after the post-mortem had been made to ascertain the cause of his death, and George made me go in and look at him. He was dressed for the casket, in black, above which his face looked like wax, and he seemed to have shrunk to half his normal size. I only mention this incident because of its peculiar and lasting effect. In reading fiction I have a set of houses, places, etc., in which I visualize the action of the story. To this day I cannot shift a scene to a room on the upper left of the central hall, for that waxen black-robed figure is always there. If the action demands both sides of the house, I hastily erect a room beyond as large and as different as possible, but I never can make it open into the hall.

Fortunately the women of Spanish countries do not attend funerals, so I was spared that. We all sat round, however, after Mr. Atherton had been taken away, waiting for the men to return. The Big House had several new inmates. Isabel had arrived from Chile some months since with three small children and three swarthy nurses. She was a lively little thing, but the ugly duckling of a singularly handsome family. She and George were Mrs. Atherton's favourites.

The men returned, accompanied by Mr. Grogan, Mr. Atherton's partner in the real estate business, who was to read the will. We all trailed into the sitting-room, possibly because Mr. Atherton had died there. The bed, however, had been removed.

It was like scenes on the stage that I saw later in life. Mr. Grogan sat in the middle of the room, a large pair of spectacles on his nose, and read from a long and technical document. Ten figures in black were grouped about him. Frank, George, Faxon, and Lawrence looked like undertakers. Mrs. Atherton, Alejandra, Elena, and Isabel were heavy laden with crepe, but, for some reason, no one had thought of providing Florence and me with mourning, and we wore what we had been able to scratch together. Florence had thrown a black shawl of her mother's over her white summer frock, and I was uneasily conscious of four ruffles on an old black skirt. I saw Mrs. Atherton eyeing them, for she missed nothing, at any time. It was a lugubrious scene, but struck me as highly dramatic, and I was pleasurably excited, as always, over a new experience.

The will was long and involved, as all such documents are, but the pith of it was that the estate was not to be divided until the youngest surviving child was twenty-one. Mrs. Atherton was then to receive half, the remainder to be divided among the children, all moneys that had been advanced (including the cost of their houses) to be deducted from their share. The executors, Mr. Grogan and Mrs.



Atherton, could sell and reinvest at will, with the exception of Valparaiso Park, which was to be Mrs. Atherton's for life. It may be said here that she immediately rented a house in town for the winter. I had often heard her and her friends lament that they were forced to live in the country the year round while the men only slept there.

## VI

AGAIN there was an abrupt change in my life. Mr. Atherton for many years had been one of the most extensive land holders in California and owned ranches all over the State. The largest of these, the Milpitas Ranch, comprising some forty-five thousand acres, and about eighty miles south of Monterey, had been in litigation for several years. He had bought it as a Spanish Grant, but squatters maintained there was a flaw in the Grant and that it was Government land. Shortly before his death the higher courts decided in his favour, but the squatters refused to budge. George, as might have been expected, had failed in business, and his doting mother persuaded Mr. Grogan to give him the management of the ranch. He liked out-door life as much as he detested an office, and she was firmly persuaded that no son of hers could be a permanent failure; he needed but the right opportunity. Accordingly we set forth bag and baggage, including the Chinese cook.

We took the train to Salinas and there hired a spring wagon to convey us the rest of the way. George had decided that a wagon would be preferable to the stage, which, when it arrived, might already be half full. But anything would have been preferable to that wagon, whose springs were none too good for the rough roads we traversed, and in which we were badly cramped.

Such a trip! When we were not rattling over narrow

mountain roads along the edge of precipices, sometimes slipping over but rescued by the terrified plunging horse, we were fording rivers whose waters roared above the hubs of the wheels. Ellen, the nurse, muttered, the child whimpered and screamed, I wished I were dead. George was happy, for he had reins in his hands, and, having no imagination, knew not the meaning of fear. The Chinaman, of course, was impassive as a clam.

We arrived before night at Jolon, a straggling village on the edge of the ranch, where we were to remain until one of the squatters' houses could be put in order for our occupation. The 'hotel' was a long low adobe building, and our room had neither fireplace nor window. Ellen and the baby were accommodated in a sort of wooden shed built against the house. Two sheriffs, who were to evict the squatters, had met us, and as our door had to be left open at night, one of them sat before it; the squatters had threatened to 'kill any Atherton who showed his face on the ranch.'

The business of evicting began on the following morning. Of course they would not take me along, and although I had had enough of spring wagons, I watched them with some envy as they piled in, armed to the teeth, and went forth to their adventure.

One cannot withhold a certain admiration from men of this type, whether their blind courage be due to lack of imagination or not. The ranch was a cattle range with farming land scattered here and there, and from these patches, the squatters – Mexicans for the most part – had managed to extract a bare living. Only one or two had either sheep or cattle. At the first farm where George and the sheriffs stopped, six men were drawn up in a row with rifles at their shoulders. Our heroes sprang to the ground, brushed the fire-eaters aside, marched into the house and flung the furniture out of the windows. Not a shot was fired. Then the sheriffs collected the guns and retired. At other farms there

was not even a show of resistance. The men cursed but submitted. There was a huge Mexican named Castro with a hairy chest who followed George about on this day and many others, or walked round him in circles, particularly when he found him alone, grinding his teeth and muttering direst threats. But he never did anything.

Several days later I drove over to the Mission of San Antonio, many years before one of the most splendid of those old California establishments founded by the padres in the latter part of the eighteenth century. It stood almost in the centre of the ranch, and the squatters had herded their families and livestock into its precincts while they went off to seek a warmer hospitality elsewhere.

It was a strange sight. The church and yard were crowded with women, children, sheep, and goats. Winter was approaching and it was already very cold, but the immensely fat Mexican women wore but a single calico garment. The brown children, playing with the goats, were stark naked. It was no warmer in the tottering church and the first rain would add to their miseries.

Mrs. Atherton was a generous woman, but knew as much about poverty as an infant in arms. I doubt if she had ever seen any one poorer than a well-paid servant. For that matter there was no actual poverty in San Francisco at that time, nor for many years after. But she had felt vaguely that something should be done by the victor for the vanquished, and given me a bolt of calico and two red flannel petticoats to bestow upon the dispossessed. This was the first time that I also had been brought into contact with poverty and I was horrified. I could not see myself in the role of lady of the manor presenting something like fifty half-naked women and wholly naked children with a bolt of calico and two flannel petticoats as a protection against bitter weather and compensation for all they had lost. I carried them back with me, and the woman who kept the

hotel – a woman with a black beard and false teeth which she clicked up and down for my amusement – made the presentation later.

## V I I

GEORGE decided to occupy Castro's house and sent for the furniture. Meanwhile, we remained at the hotel, where the Chinaman, Fong, cooked our food. Otherwise we should have starved. As it was we had to take our meals in a room with greasy Mexicans and hairy Americans who had never washed below the chin since they were born.

Sometimes miners and other rough characters left the stage at Jolon and stopped for the night, and on these occasions I was forbidden to leave my room unescorted by George. Nevertheless, I did; and one night I was walking up and down the deserted veranda →corridor it was called in Spanish houses – when I happened to glance through the window of a room next to the general store – and lost my breath.

Four men were seated at a table gambling, while my husband and others looked on. The men, heavily bearded, wore broad hats, rough flannel shirts, and high boots, into which their 'pants' disappeared. On the table beside each lay a Colt revolver and a pile of glittering twenty-dollar gold pieces. The room was lit with a smoking lamp which threw distorted shadows on the walls.

I stood there for an hour, fascinated, hoping for drama. Surely the moment must come when one of those silent, watchful, scowling men would spring to his feet with an oath, seize his pistol, and shoot; which, of course, would be the signal for a general scrimmage. Drama indeed!

But they rarely raised their eyes from their cards, never uttered a word. They might have been automatons. Finally

I went to bed, reflecting that life in the California wilds was not all it was cracked up to be.

Shortly after, we moved into the 'Castro house,' an adobe mansion with three rooms, an attic, and a lean-to that served as a kitchen. Fong slept in the attic, to which he climbed by an outside stair. But the house had been freshly whitewashed within and was clean at least.

The Milpitas was a magnificent ranch of hills and valleys, with thousands of oak trees and a river. I should have enjoyed riding and driving about it had the season been summer. But it was winter and the rain fell with a tiresome persistence. There was even snow, and it was bitterly cold. The river roared unceasingly.

I did not mind the rough life, for it was novel, and I was now comparatively strong. The headaches and backaches from which I had suffered since adolescence afflicted me no more. But I had no one to talk to but Ellen. George was in his element. Clad in overalls and rubber boots, he was out all day, doing heaven knows what, and if other resources failed him he drove over to Jolon and found congenial spirits at the store.

The little boy was still very delicate, and shivering most of the time despite the burning logs in the open fireplace. As we were dependent upon Jolon for provisions the meals were sometimes scanty, although a Chinaman can conjure an appetizing dish out of a bone and a cress.

The Athertons sent me a Christmas box, with plum cake and mince pies, but the most welcome of several presents was a set of Walter Scott from Alejandra. It lasted me through the long rainy winter.

It was sometimes impossible to get fresh milk in that land of cattle ranges. The baby, who should have had nourishing puddings, turned away from anything made with condensed milk. He was now old enough to run about, but he rarely even walked; he played listlessly with his toys,

close to the fire, or sat staring at the flames with eyes that looked old and wise and resigned. Finally Ellen 'struck.' 'I've made up my mind, ma'am,' she said to me one day. 'You must send Georgie and me back to civilization or he'll die on our hands. That's what! And not a doctor within forty miles! What's a man thinking of anyway to bring the two of you to a God-forsaken place like this? We both go or I go. I won't stay here to watch that blessed lamb fade away.'

I knew nothing of children, and the maternal instinct had been left out of me with other domestic virtues, but if Ellen said the child was in danger, in danger he must be, and I wrote to Mrs. Atherton. She replied at once, not asking but commanding that 'Jorjecito' be sent to her; and George, although rebellious – he had an excessive paternal instinct and worshipped this extension of his ego – was impressed by Ellen's vigorous comments and let him go.

I was now practically alone on the ranch. Rebecca, Rowena, Cœur de Lion *et al.* were my only companions and there were times when they palled. A little modern society would have been welcome, and I even felt a yearning for those old somnolent afternoons on the Big House veranda.

As passivity was no part of my original equipment I have sometimes wondered that I was not actively rebellious or at least unhappy. But youth is always adaptable, and it is possible that even I had a sense of the partnership of marriage and realized that things must be taken as they came. Perhaps Mrs. Atherton's admonitions had not fallen on infertile soil, or I took a certain pride in playing my part. George, with all his faults, one of which was an entire lack of any sense of responsibility, was a decent sort on the whole, and although he had an insane temper, was invariably good-natured when there was nothing to provoke it.

But as time passed my nerves became active. The long lonely days, the angry roar of the river threatening to leap

its walls, the almost incessant rain, nothing to do but eat, read and sleep, began to sharpen their points. Moreover, Castro, who had disappeared for a time, had been seen on the ranch again. I lived in daily dread of a visit from that hairy brute, particularly when George and the hired man, 'Mac,' were amusing themselves in Jolon. But George merely laughed at my fears.

I went one day to the kitchen where the Chinaman, seated close to the stove, was writing a novel. 'Fong,' I said, 'there are bad men on this ranch as you know. They hate Mr. Atherton and might try to kill me. If I were in danger would you protect me?'

His intelligent eyes suddenly went blank. 'No,' he said coldly. 'I do not fear death; why should you?' He shrugged and waited politely until I left, before returning to what certainly looked like a work of art. Doubtless those long strips of flimsy yellow paper with their graceful hieroglyphics, written, for the most part in a lean-to, with an icy wind whistling through the cracks, made him a famous author in China. Who can tell?

But I was hardly reassured.

A few nights later I really had cause for alarm.

I woke up suddenly. For once there was no wind and the river was merely grumbling. I distinctly heard prowling footsteps. George slept like a log, but I shook him awake and hissed in his ear that someone was outside. 'Nothing but coyotes,' he said contemptuously. 'Do let a fellow sleep.' 'I tell you -' I was beginning angrily, when there was a terrific crash in the living-room. At the same moment I heard Fong spring out of bed.

Then George did rouse himself, and we both ran into the next room. One of the roof tiles lay on the hearth, and it had unmistakably been flung down the chimney.

'Now will you believe?' I shouted. 'It's that brute Castro and he's come to murder all of us.'

He dressed hastily, and, pistol in hand, went forth to explore. I ran back to the bedroom and plunged far beneath the blankets, expecting every moment to hear the sound of shots, and wondering what I should do if he were killed, and Castro set fire to the house. Mac slept in Jolon.

But nothing happened. Life on the Milpitas was singularly devoid of climaxes.

George returned in a few moments, saying the man was a coward and only trying to frighten us off the ranch.

'That may be,' I retorted, 'but I won't stay on this ranch another day. I'll walk to Jolon if I have to and take the stage and stay with your mother in San Francisco until you come to your senses.'

To my surprise he replied: 'All right. We'll go. I've had enough of this life myself.' I did not know until later that having mismanaged the ranch in every way possible, Mr. Grogan had recalled him, and he had been afraid to tell me. I should have been too happy to revile him.

So I bade farewell to the Milpitas, which I never saw again. It is now the property of William Randolph Hearst, to-day the second largest landholder in California. Several years before Florence had repaired the Mission and it is a mecca of ardent tourists.

## VIII

ONCE more I was in my own house surrounded by the comforts of civilization and friendly neighbours: the Selbys, Eyres, Doyles, Lathams, Castles, Watkinses, Adamses, and others up in the foothills. Georgie was healthy and lively. Ellen contented. Fong still at work on his novel but never neglecting his kitchen. Spring had come and the fields were full of golden poppies. The woods were green and the long strands of moss depending like grey beards from the ancient



trees waved in a gentle breeze. Mrs. Atherton returned from the city and opened her house. Florence was in Europe with the Rathbones.

There was but one fly in the honey of my content. George had nothing to do and was round the house all day, when not at his mother's. He had mismanaged two ranches and failed twice in business, and Mr. Grogan refused to advance him money for further enterprises. In common with the other heirs he received an income from the estate.

If a woman's place is the home, a man's is anywhere else between the hours of nine and six, and it seemed to me that the worst trial I had yet been called upon to endure was having a husband continually on my hands. I couldn't talk to him, for he was interested in nothing but horses. Moreover, he was jealous of the very books I read, and if I smiled to myself he wanted to know what I was thinking about, and accused me of having secrets from him. I tried my best to make him read and did succeed in adjusting him to *Peveler of the Peak*. He plodded at it faithfully every day to please me, but hadn't finished it when he died nine years later.

Fortunately Mrs. Atherton bought two horses that had never been driven and after that he spent much of his time in a breaking cart. In summer he put on overalls and worked in the fields. He even drove a stage from Redwood City (the capital of the county) to the coast, but lost that job when he turned it over and nearly killed six Chinamen. After that Mrs. Atherton bought him a horse and sulky.

Muriel, my second and last child, was born and for some time I was ailing and lethargic. Then, suddenly, almost over night, I became stronger than ever before, and correspondingly restless. There were also minor trials. George never paid his bills, and there was a disagreeable aftermath of his late business venture in San Francisco. It seemed to me as if I were destined to spend my life under a shower

of bills, summonses, and writs. Eventually Mrs. Atherton came to the rescue and paid off his creditors, but the household bills remained always in arrears. The effect upon me was lasting. I conceived a morbid horror of bills and have never had a debt of my own save as a strict matter of business.

I also awoke to the fact that I never had a cent to spend. Hitherto I had felt no personal need of money, for layettes had been provided in abundance and Mrs. Atherton occasionally replenished my simple wardrobe. I should have much preferred to be dressed by my husband, but although he bought himself a new suit every month it never seemed to occur to him that I should enjoy going to town occasionally in the fascinating pursuit of a new frock. When I asked him for an allowance he merely smiled in the superior masculine manner. Women had no use for money. What had I to spend it on? Clothes? I always looked as well as anybody. Books? He scowled, and when he scowled his skin seemed to turn quite black. Books! I spent too much time reading as it was. I should be learning to keep house, and to sew for my children. The house ran like a modern electric clock – no thanks to me! – and the children had more clothes than they needed.

Even my grandfather, poor as he was and with two families to support, had always provided me with pocket money. It had given me a pleasant sense of independence, and this latent but inherent attribute of my character, long suppressed, awakened. No doubt if the world had emerged from the stifling Victorian era, I should have 'gone out and found a job.' But I had never heard of women supporting themselves save by teaching or 'taking in boarders.'

Then I wondered if there was any money in writing. My impulse to write fiction had revived only twice since the days of Clarke Institute. At St. Mary's I had written a play – so-called – acted by myself and my class-mates; and at Sayre a story of a boy, who, disguised as a girl, had

insinuated himself into a girls' boarding-school, and created a considerable ferment; a story that delighted my friends and was productive of a lecture from Major McClellan.

The impulse was still dormant. Babies may be good for the health, but they drain all other creative vitality for the time being. I decided to try my hand at articles for *The Argonaut*, a new weekly magazine, which, being the fashion, even Mrs. Atherton took in. I wrote several articles – unsigned, as the time had not come to invite the family wrath – and they were accepted but not paid for. I was too proud to mention the subject of remuneration to the editors with whom I had a pleasant correspondence, and, in truth, too set up at seeing myself in print to care whether I was remunerated or not.

I had other distractions and other causes for pride. Florence returned from Europe and the house was full of young people, although she was not to come out until the following winter, and I had, admittedly, the two most beautiful children that as yet had been contributed to the clan. Georgie now had rosy cheeks and sparkling eyes. His skin was white as milk, and, as he was an Atherton born, my mother-in-law conceded that even pure blonds were worthy of admiration. Muriel had dark blue eyes with heavy black lashes, black hair and features as regular as her brother's. Later her hair turned canary colour and her eyes brown. Finally, when about six, she settled down to brown hair and hazel eyes. But that was far in the future.

## I X

DURING the winter we visited Mrs. Atherton in town and I 'came out' with Florence. She and I and two Blanding girls, Lena and Edith, had more partners at the many balls than any one else. I had a fearful time with George,

who was jealous of every man with whom I danced twice. He used to beat his head against the walls of the carriage going home and moan that I didn't love him and that he was going mad. If I had had any inclination for devious adventure I never should have dared, for I am certain he would have killed me. However, despite the nuisance he made of himself, I had a wonderful time, and, when at a party, forgot him entirely, forgot I was not a young girl in her first season, quaffing the first golden draught in the magic cup of life. So easily was I satisfied in those days!

Muriel was baptized during the winter. Important as baptism was in the Catholic Church, the ceremony had been delayed because we could not agree upon a name. Mrs. Atherton wanted Guadalupe Florencia Ignacia. Florence, who was to be godmother, had a passion for Gladys, and George for some reason, favoured Alice. I was determined upon Muriel. But it was impossible to win them over. Who had ever heard of such a name outside of a book? The controversy raged all summer and at times was more than heated. Finally I announced that I was bored with the subject and refused to discuss it further. They naturally concluded I had accepted defeat as gracefully as possible, and decided upon Alicia Florencia Guadalupe. One day Mrs. Atherton exclaimed briskly, 'We have that baby baptize! I no permit another day pass.'

Accordingly, on the following afternoon a small party assembled in the sacristy of St. Mary's Cathedral: Mrs. Atherton, George, Florence, Arthur Page, who was to be godfather, the nurse and child, and my insignificant self. Archbishop Alemany entered in his white robe and took his place at the font. One fact Mrs. Atherton had overlooked. I might be nothing but the baby's mother, but there was no getting away from the fact that I was her mother, and Archbishops have a due sense of the proprieties. When all were properly grouped he turned to me with his gentle

courtesy and asked me by what name the child was to be baptized.

'Muriel Florence,' I replied, in a clear matter-of-fact voice.

A quick intaking of breath. Daggers shooting from three pairs of eyes. But there could be no argument there, and the baby was duly christened by the name I had always intended should be hers. Not a word was said on the subject until some months after, when Mrs. Atherton observed handsomely, 'At first I no like that name because I no think I can pronounce, but now I find I can say Mural very well.'

When Muriel was about ten she was in a convent school with 'Birdie' Fair, afterward Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Jun., who fell in love with the name and vowed she'd give it to her first daughter if she ever had one. She did, and I believe that at one time there was quite a crop of little Muriels in New York.

Another event occurred during this visit, which could hardly be called a welcome relief from social gaieties. My nurse – Ellen had 'retired' – had a baby in Mrs. Atherton's house. Oddly enough, she gave little evidence of her condition, although Mrs. Atherton had her suspicions; few things escaped those sharp eyes. One day she taxed the girl and even prodded her none too gently. But the girl was so innocent, so astonished, so full of righteous indignation, that Mrs. Atherton almost concluded she had been mistaken, almost but not quite. As for me I would not listen to her suspicions.

One night I was awakened by wild shrieks. I sprang out of bed thinking a burglar was committing murder and ran into the hall. The screams came from the nursery, and Mrs. Atherton was standing at the door, a bandage in her hand. She was smiling sardonically. 'Your so innocent nurse,' she said, 'she having the baby. Never I make the mistake.'

The girl had not made a stitch for her child, but she

knew exactly what she wanted done with it, and a highly amused doctor wrapped it in a blanket and carried it off to the foundling asylum. It was the end of the season, and despite Mrs. Atherton's warnings I took the girl back to the country with me. She was a good nurse and no doubt she had been the victim of a scoundrel. Shortly after she eloped with one of the men painting the house and left me in the lurch. I grew older and wiser by degrees.

## X

ONCE more I was uprooted. George heard of a grape farm in the north, near Oroville, and was convinced he could make a fortune out of it. As Mr. Grogan had put his foot down once for all, his mother lent him the money; to be repaid when the estate was divided.

Again we set forth, bag, baggage, and furniture, two children this time, and a new Chinese cook; Fong had returned to his native land to publish his novel and get himself a second wife.

The less said about that adventure the better. It was a nightmare. The house was very old and battalions of bed bugs marched over the wooden walls day and night. They thrived on germicides. The nurse used to exhibit a chamber-pot half full of them every morning, with unpleasant remarks. Like Ellen of old, she struck, and I packed her off with Muriel to my all-enduring mother-in-law. The Chinese cook went mad and tried to kill the family, but was laid out by George and taken off in irons. The 'hired girl' who followed him, served the roast in the soup tureen and left on the second day because she had not been invited to take her meals with the family. But we managed to get another Chinaman. The water was so bad that the health of George and the little boy was permanently affected. A

horse ran away with me and jumped over a bank, but fortunately caught in a tree and a man dashed down and rescued me. Lightning struck the telephone while I was at the instrument and flung me across the room. The thermometer generally stood at 104° and dropped but two or three degrees at night. George got in with a wild set in Oroville and sometimes did not come home until two in the morning, and we were several miles from the nearest neighbour. Fortunately the Chinaman drugged himself with an opium pipe at night, and nothing was to be apprehended from him.

There was only one way to make a ranch of that sort pay and that was for the owner to do all the work himself. George had three hired men and his money was soon exhausted. Mrs. Atherton very properly refused to lend him any more, and there was nothing to do but leave.

It was while I was walking down the road, taking my last look at the beautiful blue mountains in the distance and wondering what was coming next, that I remembered Butte County was auriferous, and it occurred to me there might be a gold mine under the ranch. The idea was very exciting, but I knew that George if left to himself would sell the place for a song, and probably mortgage it first. When I returned to the house, therefore, I asked him if he would give it to me. At first he stared at me as if he thought I had gone as mad as the late Chinese cook, and when I remarked that every wife should have something of her own, he turned black and sputtered. Where had I got *that* idea? Logic failing, I tried cajoling, and as he was feeling malariaish, and believed the ranch to be worthless, and hated it for not having made his fortune overnight, he finally gave way. The ranch was formally made over to me, and I placed it in the hands of an agent to rent. It never fulfilled my expectations, but for a time, until the tenant took to drink and let the vines go to waste, I had a small yearly

rental from it, and the pleasant sense of possessing something of my own.

## XI

It was during the early days of the following winter that my inner life underwent an upheaval that far exceeded in variety and interest any of the abrupt permutations of fortune contributed by my husband.

George read his newspaper from the first headline to the last advertisement, but that was one of life's daily amusements to which I had not yet awakened. I never even glanced at the headlines, and I doubt if I knew who was President of the United States at the moment.

But one day I had nothing to read. My grandfather – to whom I had recently become reconciled – had lent me his ancient edition of Herodotus, Thucydides, and Xenophon, and I had just finished the last of the six little volumes. Mr. Doyle I had not seen for several weeks and nearly all the neighbours had gone to town for the winter.

A copy of the morning newspaper lay on the floor of the porch where George had left it. I picked it up and looked over it, mildly curious to see what it contained that could make even George, who hated the printed line, devour it so eagerly. I had come to the conclusion that newspapers were both vulgar and dull when my eye was caught by a familiar name – Nelly Gordon. I had heard much of her since the days when I had listened to my mother and her friends discuss her piquant beauty, her accomplishments, her vivacity, and the sinister rumour that she 'drank.' Her father, in the vain hope of saving her from the influence of her diabolical mother, had confided in Mrs. Atherton and she had invited the girl to spend six months at Val-paraiso Park. Her mother sent her bottles of whisky in her laundry. Mr. Gordon shipped her off to Europe and



she returned with a miserable specimen of a man whom she insisted upon marrying. Her father died of a broken heart, and the two, mother and daughter, settled down to a life of drunken orgies at their country place, Palo Alto, a mile from Menlo Park, and now the seat of Stanford University.

All the gilded youth of the neighbourhood were made welcome there, and no doubt they found the entertainment afforded at Palo Alto a welcome relief from the heavy respectability of the county. One day George, then little more than a boy, went over to see Nelly, of whom he was very fond. The front door was open, the house silent. He wandered from room to room. The servants were drunk. Mrs. Gordon was drunk, a heavy bloated mass on her bed. He knew that she had flung Nelly down the stair a day or two ago and wondered if the girl were dead. He found her in her own room gasping out her life. Her face was smeared with jelly; some drunken hand had evidently tried to feed her. He washed her face and stayed with her until she died.

The 'story' that immediately enthralled me was entitled 'What Am I Bid?' and related in a highly sensational manner the auctioning of some newly discovered effects of the Gordons. There were Mr. Gordon's Crimean medal, an old photograph album containing presentments of San Francisco's respectable *élite* (which an anxious gentleman bid in), classical music scores, private letters, and – Nelly's white satin wedding-dress, yellowed with time, which, with a pair of tiny white shoes, was knocked down to an 'old clo' man' for a dollar!

Before I had finished it seemed to me that something was battering at a sealed door in my brain . . . the door went down with a crash . . . that something burst out. The 'rotten spot' had sprung to action. Here was a story at last and I would write it.

I put on my hat – and the heavy veil with which I pro-

tected my complexion, a habit firmly persisted in despite the jibes of Florence and the other girls – and, newspaper in hand, walked rapidly over to Alejandra's – Alex, as we called her. She was my best friend in the family, taking my part when Mrs. Atherton was disposed to be too severe on my shortcomings, against George (for whom she had no use whatever), when he railed at my 'everlasting reading,' against the others, when, if I referred enthusiastically to some book that interested me at the moment, intimated that I was 'trying to show off all I knew.' Although she read little herself she sympathized with my love of books.

She was a large gracious presence, indifferent to dress, her beautiful mahogany-coloured hair twisted into an untidy knot, but always stately and serene. Indolent, like most Spanish women, but with a good deal of internal fire. Handicapped by her temperament and her time, for she had great potentialities. I often wondered as I grew older if she harboured any secret regrets. Lawrence was a charming person, a man of the great world, and a devoted husband (all the Atherton women knew how to keep their husbands in thrall), but he was of the earth earthy, and his carking ambition was to be one of the richest men in California; an ambition that reduced his fortune by degrees on the stock market. Not the man to develop the latent greatness in any woman, spiritual or mental. I think she must have speculated sadly at times on what she might have been had fate given her a husband of high moral calibre and mental attainments.

As she disliked physical exertion in any form, her large house was all on one story, and I always recall her seated in the immense central room, softly lighted from above, and richly furnished with Oriental rugs on the inlaid floor, hangings and carved Italian furniture she had brought from Europe. The walls were covered with her own copies of masters, old and modern. She may have been denied origi-

nality of conception, but her drawing and colouring were unexcelled by any dilettante, nor did her work lack the spirit and fire of the originals.

She was engaged on a piece of tapestry as I burst in upon her, and she smiled at my excited face.

'Alex,' I exclaimed. 'If I tell you something will you swear never to breathe it?'

'Certainly,' she replied, looking amused. 'What is it? Not another baby, I hope.'

'Good heavens, no! I should be tearing my hair. But first read that.' And I thrust the newspaper into her hand.

She read the article slowly. 'Poor Nelly!' she said when she had finished. 'What a fate! But what has excited *you*?'

'I am going to write a novel,' I announced. 'And I want you to tell me everything you know about her.'

'A novel?' She looked at me dubiously. 'Isn't that rather an undertaking for a girl of your age?'

'Maybe. But I'm going to do it all the same. One has to begin some time – and I'll tell you what I've never told any one – here at least – I've always intended to be an author. I forgot it for a while, but now I've waked up and I'll never go to sleep again.'

'Very well,' she said with an expressive shrug. 'But I'd advise you to keep that ambition to yourself until you *are* one – if you know what I mean. I always believed you had something in you that hadn't come out yet, and I'll do what I can to help you.' And she then told me all she knew of the Gordon history.

## X I I

SHE went to town soon after for the winter and I wrote with furious concentration on my novel. I had the complete skeleton of a story, but all the incidents must be invented,

a past era re-created, and a romantic hero concocted out of whole cloth. For the first time in my life I was supremely happy. George was furious and made a nuisance of himself, stalking in and out of the room, pounding on the door if I locked it, and reviling the fates for inflicting him with a wife so different from the wives of other lucky fellows. Of course it was impossible to conceal from him that I was writing a book, but there was no need to ask him to keep my secret, for not only was he ashamed of the fact that I was demeaning myself, but was confident that it would never see the light. What was I but a child anyhow? Who would want to read any book of mine? I must have taken leave of what little sense I ever had.

The book was finished. Being at the alliterative age I proudly christened it *The Randolphs of Redwoods*; and as I felt I was now a real author I signed it with my own name. Let the Athertons revile me if they would; more likely they would be consumed with pride.\*

I sent it to *The Argonaut*. A few days later I received a letter from the associate editor, Jerome Hart, asking me to come to town and see him. I borrowed my fare from the nurse, and, waiting for George to take himself off, walked to Fair Oaks station and flagged the train. I was so excited that the train seemed to crawl. Curiously enough, it had never occurred to me that the story might be rejected, and I had suffered none of the agonizing doubts that usually beset a young writer when he sends his first manuscript forth on its adventures.

Mr. Hart, a wise-looking young man with spectacles and a short brown beard, received me with impressive dignity, offered me a chair on the opposite side of his desk, and, placing his finger-tips together, informed me that he and Mr. Pixley, the editor-in-chief and owner of the paper, had decided, after considerable hesitation, to publish my story.

'But,' he added, with deepening impressiveness, 'it is going to make a sensation, you know. You have not only revived an old scandal – with an almost disconcerting vividness – but you have put nearly every prominent social character into your book, and they are quite unmistakable: Mrs. Hall McAllister, the "three Macs," your sister-in-law, Mrs. Rathbone, the Barrons, Ransomes, and heaven knows who not. Only your hero – ahem! rather the result of reading than observation, I fancy – is imaginary. Now all this is leading up to a piece of advice I feel it my duty to give you. You have signed this story with your own name. Be wise and let it appear anonymously. It will run for several weeks – our first serial, by the way – and I think you will be spared a good deal of unpleasantness if you preserve your anonymity.'

I had listened to him breathlessly. 'I don't mind a bit, so long as you publish it,' I replied ingenuously. 'It will be wonderful to make a sensation and hear what everybody says – and guessing at the authorship. But do you really think it *will* make a sensation?'

'Oh, yes, no doubt of that,' he said drily. 'And *The Argonaut* will come in for its share of hard raps, but I think we can stand it.'

At this moment an elderly man, bewhiskered and rather slovenly in appearance, holding a slip of blue paper in his hand, entered the room and was introduced as Mr. Pixley.

He looked at me with both humour and curiosity. 'What an infant you are to have written such a story,' he observed. 'I've seen you dancing once or twice, and you didn't look as if you had an idea in your head.'

I was rather dashed, for I had always hoped I looked intellectual. But I answered with spirit: 'Well, I probably hadn't, for I love dancing. But it's different when you're writing,' I added largely. 'And, anyhow, a story seems to write itself.'

‘Just so. Well, run along and buy some fol-de-rols with this.’

He handed me a cheque. I glanced at it hastily. It was for a hundred and fifty dollars. ‘All that!’ I gasped. And, in truth, no cheque has ever seemed so large to me since. Of course, money in those days was worth three times what it is now, and no wonder I felt as if a fortune had fallen into my lap.

I went forth from that office determined to spend every cent of it and that very day. I might never have a sum like that of my own again, and the pleasure of indulging in an orgy of spending would equal all it could command.

At the White House, one of the big dry-goods stores, I bought a dress I badly needed and a number of presents; then I almost ran to the book store of C. Beach, and, with the help of the young partner, Alexander Robertson – now the dean of booksellers in San Francisco – I proceeded to furnish my bookcase.

It was a weird assortment: collected speeches of Fox, Burke, Pitt, and Daniel Webster; Gladstone’s *Gleanings of Past Years* (duller than Hume); Emerson’s *Essays*; Macaulay’s *Essays and History of England*; Kinglake’s *History of the Crimean War* and *Eothen*; *Vathek*; Herbert Spencer’s *First Principles* and his *Essay on Style*; Pepys’ and Evelyn’s *Diaries*; Taine’s *History of English Literature*; Richard Grant White’s *Words and Their Uses*; *The Moonstone*, and several volumes of Daudet. That was before the Copyright Act, and reprints of foreign books were far cheaper then than now.

When the imposing packages arrived on the following day I spread their contents proudly on the bed and floor. George merely glared at them and walked out. If I were a decent wife, I was informed later when he was able to speak, I would have handed that money to my husband to pay his bills with, instead of wasting it on myself. But he was even more disturbed that ‘the thing’ was to be published, and

if I had not refrained from informing him that it was expected to make a sensation, no doubt he would have gone to *The Argonaut* offices and made such a scene – looking quite black in the face and shouting at the top of his voice – that the editors might have thought it wise to suppress the story. He was but little reconciled when I told him it was to appear anonymously.

### XIII

AND a sensation it made! So far as I know not any piece of writing before or since has ever made such a turmoil in San Francisco. Everybody who was known to have written for publication was accused of the authorship of that ‘infamous story,’ that ‘immoral, unpardonable, and brutal revival of a deplorable scandal that every decent citizen was only too willing to bury.’ The suspected authors were cut right and left and one poor man, despite his passionate denials, barely escaped from expulsion from the Union Club.

The excitement must have reached its apex in Menlo Park, for on no veranda, at no lunch nor dinner table that summer was anything else discussed. As no one ever bothered about my opinions, my silence was unnoticed. I was nothing but a bookworm anyhow.

And here is a curious fact. Alex completely forgot that – to me – momentous occasion when she had given me so much valuable material. Forgot that I had confided in her my determination to be an author. But as all the Athertons had short memories, perhaps this was not so remarkable as the lapse of Mr. Doyle, whom I had met on my return journey from the city and to whom I had exultingly told the great secret. He too had forgotten. And no one was angrier than he. His brother had been suspected of being the father of Nelly Gordon’s child, and he knew that every one was commenting on a rumour long forgotten and endeavouring to

trace resemblances between his brother and the hero of the story. He unbosomed himself freely to me, but by this time I had learned to look bored whenever the subject of *The Randolphs of Redwoods* came up, while inwardly consumed with mirth. Poor George was frantic. At any moment the truth might come out, and the name of Atherton be forever disgraced.

I had expected that Alex would be flattered by the portrait I had drawn of her in Chonita Hathaway. But she was not. Far from it. It took me some time to learn that although every one secretly cherishes the ambition to be 'put in a book,' no one is ever satisfied with anything save incense, butter, and honey, unrelieved by salt or spice.

The secret leaked out in course of time. Mr. Doyle never spoke to me again. Mrs. Rathbone did not speak to me for a year. I had 'made a fool of her.' She had been my devoted friend, as fond of me as if I had been her own child, and I had grossly deceived her. In vain I tried to recall to her memory the day I had run to her with the newspaper story of the auction, and she had told me all she knew of Nelly Gordon and her family. Nothing of the sort had ever happened. It was evident that I was a born story-teller in more senses than one, and she was the more disappointed in me, and indignant, as she had always thought me almost unwisely truthful – blurting out everything that came into my head when it would be wiser to hold my tongue.

She turned her broad back on me. My own went up. Let her think what she liked. It was surely her own fault if she had a bad memory, and my conscience acquitted me of any intention to deceive her. If she had not been away from the time the story was commenced until the publication of the first chapters, no doubt I should have confided in her once more. True, I might have done so when the excitement began and I saw she had forgotten, but the drama was too amusing to spoil.



I seem to have been born with the gift of brushing any one who is offended with or alienated from me, off my mind. For the time being they do not exist. Equally, if time heals the wound, I am willing to resume the unity exactly where it was broken. My relations with my mother and grandfather were as natural as of old. The past had not been mentioned. Once my mother had remarked grimly that 'this grandmother business had been her finish,' but she never reproached me, and we were on better terms than when she had me on her hands.

My grandfather had lost The Ranch and taken a house on Pine Street. My mother rarely left it. The girls were growing up and she had discovered a latent talent and made all their frocks. They could not have been smarter if turned out by a French dressmaker. She had a curious habit of standing up while she sewed; standing on her feet beside the bed for hours at a time. But it never seemed to fatigue her.

I sometimes thought it a pity she was not an invalid, for I know of no more satisfactory career for women than invalidism. The ego develops magnificently. Their world is bounded by four walls. The other members of the family are martyrs, and an interesting doctor calls every day. But, doomed to a life of no social contacts, she was as strong as her Puritan ancestors had been when they founded a civilization in an unbroken wilderness; all the outlet she had for her energies was sewing for the girls and reading aloud to my grandfather at night!

She was still handsome, still took the greatest care of herself. She seldom talked, and I often wondered what she thought about. No doubt her thoughts were bitter enough.

It was when Muriel was six months old that it suddenly occurred to me I would like to see my grandfather again. I wrote him a polite note asking him to come down for lunch on the following Sunday. He accepted as politely, and we met as if this were but one in a sequence of many visits. We

had a delightful day, and he was in the best of humours. He was enchanted with Georgie, and interested in the books I had read. It was only as he was leaving that he said to me peremptorily, 'Go and see your mother.' I went the next day, taking the two children and the nurse as bodyguard. My mother exclaimed almost before she had greeted me, 'What a perfectly beautiful baby!' and immediately began to dandle it. So that was that.

My grandfather was unchanged in appearance. Indeed he never had a wrinkle nor even a line as long as he lived. But he was growing very tired, and often fell asleep when my mother was reading to him at night. It is a great pity that I could not have made money a few years before I did, and delivered him for the rest of his life from his monotonous but exacting duties. I should also have liked to take him to Europe, which he longed to visit, as well as the Oxford of his youth.

The girls were both very handsome. Only Rose was looking old and tired. She did all the work, as ever. It would never have occurred to my mother to bid the girls help her, and compel them to perform an obvious duty if they rebelled. No more than it would have occurred to Rose to complain. She had only one child left, her daughter Julia, who was studying to be a teacher. One of her sons had been killed in a saloon fight in New Jersey, and the other lost at sea.

## X I V

THE Athertons, true to their creed, never mentioned the subject of *The Randolphs* in my presence after I had acknowledged the authorship, but I was not invited to town that winter! Just as well that I was not, for no doubt I should have been cold-shouldered and asked to no more parties. 'Everybody' was furious with me – an unknown chit – for

'taking them in,' and convinced there was something radically wrong with a young wife and mother who wrote at all, much less a wicked, improper, cynical, scandalous, and altogether abominable story like *The Randolphs of Redwoods*. No doubt I would go to the bad altogether before long, and they pitied the poor Athertons who had always held their heads so high. (A pity not unmixed with satisfaction. 'God may have made Himself first but He made the Athertons next,' one of them had remarked in my hearing.)

I also had for the time being an implacable enemy in Alejandra. The *News Letter*, a weekly sheet, ran a series of society articles, so scandalous and personal that the editor was obliged to employ an ex-prizefighter as bodyguard, and Mrs. Rathbone accused me publicly of the authorship. She 'knew' I had written them, and people believed her. But if she had not had so many sides to her character she would not have been half so interesting.

All this disturbed me little. I had a new book under weigh, and it occupied me for many months. I think it must have run to something like three hundred thousand words. In it were Cavour, King Vittorio Emanuele, d'Azéglío, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Napoleon III, Morny, de Maupas, and all that crew; Thackeray, Charlotte Brontë – every one else of that time I could crowd in, besides innumerable imagined characters. The heroine was all I should have liked to be myself: the most fascinating and beautiful of women, widowed at an early age that she might go abroad and play a great role in European politics. A *mélange* of Madame de Staël, Madame Récamier, and Lady Blessington.

I sent it to an Eastern publisher – Houghton Mifflin, I think – and it was promptly returned. Much to my dismay, for I had cherished the delusion that it was a great historical novel. It was my first repulse, and for a time I was both stunned and angry. But I had my moments of humility. After all, I was too young and had seen too little of the

world to attempt so ambitious a work. Better put it aside for a while, and rewrite it when I had had more experience. I stowed it away in the attic. The rats ate it.

I returned to my studies, the creative instinct demanding a rest after so mighty an effort. I borrowed several books from my grandfather, among them Voltaire's *Philosophical Dictionary*, and Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, rare and fascinating books which I wish I had not honestly returned. I also read Fiske's *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, far easier reading than Spencer.

It was during the following summer that I had my first introduction to Henry James. The Selbys, who lived on the neighbouring estate, returned from one of their frequent visits to Europe. The girls, Annie and Jeannie – the last a beauty, who some years later married Faxon – had 'caught the Henry James craze,' and had all his books to date. I became an immediate convert. Howell's star was also in the ascendant, but he made all life seem commonplace, and I detested him. I think it a pity he ever lived, for he was a blight on American letters. He founded the school of the commonplace, and to any young writer who hated the commonplace as I did, the Howells tradition was an almost insurmountable obstacle on his upward path. Those who followed in his footsteps were reasonably sure of success, not only because the critics, largely of his own ilk, decreed that realism (littleism would have been a better word) was the fashion, but because the majority of fiction readers were necessarily commonplace and enjoyed reading about their own kind. James, even in his first manner, was too aristocratic, too lofty and detached, to command as large a following as Howells, but that following was an ardent one. And mostly among women. I remember an irritated male calling us 'Henry James fools.'

The Selbys, like the rest of Menlo Park, had decided to overlook my recent iniquity, as they were obliged to meet

me constantly and always avoided awkwardness of any kind. (By this time the authorship of the *News Letter* articles was known and I was exonerated of the greater offence.) In our little way we were gay in summer, and while sitting side by side on moonlight hay-rides, picking caterpillars out of food at picnics, and dancing on Saturday nights, it would certainly have been awkward if they had not been on speaking terms with me.

But they secretly disapproved of me. I was not really one of them. I was 'different.' Said Mrs. Selby to me one day: 'Dear Annie has a talent for writing and has written some exquisite things. But - ' and she fixed me with a stern disapproving eye - '*of course* she would never think of publishing them.' 'Why not?' I asked innocently. 'If you know how to write you usually do publish - if you can.' 'No daughter of mine,' she replied coldly. 'Nor would Annie ever dream of such a thing.' And yet she was proud of the fact that her son was studying at the Beaux Arts in Paris.

My only companion during the winter months was 'old lady Watkins,' an intimate friend of Mrs. Atherton, who lived in the country the year round, with a younger cousin, 'Miss Annie,' as companion. Mrs. Watkins was in her seventies at that time, but no girl was lighter on her feet, nor more active of mind. She rose at four and her servants with her. At all hours of the day she might be seen tripping about her grounds, her sharp eyes investigating, and extracting more work from her hirelings than any of her wealthier neighbours.

We had always been friends since the day when she came to call on me, driving a sleek white horse in her old-fashioned rockaway. I fell into the habit of lunching with her every day after the yearly exodus (when Muriel was old enough for school she spent the winter in town with her grandmothers) and we read aloud to each other for the greater

part of the afternoon. She found some of my books rather hard going, and preferred memoirs, which she bought as they came out. I have never had a more delightful companion. Her grandson, Dr. James T. Watkins, is now one of the leading orthopædic surgeons in the country, but I always remember him as a small fat boy running round in his father's stove-pipe hat.

The impulse to write did not recur for a long time. The desire was there but the tract infertile. 'I don't know enough. I haven't seen enough,' I said to Mrs. Watkins gloomily. 'A novelist should know the world. What opportunity have I to study it in a hole like California? Thousands of miles from anywhere! I might as well be on Mars. I should travel and see the great world, but George hates even to go to San Francisco. Even if he could afford it he wouldn't take me to Europe.'

Mrs. Watkins had three corkscrew curls on either side of her wise wrinkled face which she always shook at me when I was in a rebellious mood. She shook them now and looked at me disapprovingly. 'Many writers have not travelled,' she said. 'They make themselves famous by using the material at hand.'

I sniffed with scorn. 'I am sick of every one I know – except you,' I added politely. 'If I tried to put any of them in a book I'd fall asleep over my work from sheer boredom. What is life in Menlo Park but sitting round on verandas in summer and little dances on Saturday nights, when George makes my life a burden if I have a good time?' And the young men! What could they teach me even if I had the opportunity to talk to them alone? They don't know anything and don't want to know anything. One Saturday night last summer when those Englishmen were down and a lot of the girls were at the Big House, we had a game where one thinks of some more or less familiar event or person and throws out leads. I thought of the Black Hole of Calcutta,

and gave every sort of lead. I told them the place was India; even Calcutta. That nearly one hundred and fifty British residents who had been unable to escape from the city were confined in a guard chamber eighteen feet long with only two small windows high up, and the thermometer at its Indian highest. That they fought one another for what little air there was and in the morning only twenty-three were alive. The others were suffocated.

‘Finally I had to tell them that it was the Black Hole of Calcutta. Not one of them had ever heard of it! The next day one of those Englishmen told some one that they had been having an amusing time the night before until Mrs. George had spoilt the whole thing by thinking of something so scientific – *scientific!* – that no one could guess. Showing off all I knew!

‘There you are! Fine preparation for being a novelist! I want to meet real men of the world, such as you read about in books. I want to live in New York, Paris, London. I want to see the beautiful things in Europe and meet all sorts and kinds of people as different from those out here as possible. I know they would inspire me to write, and I am stagnating.’

‘Well,’ she said briskly, ‘here you are for the present, so you’d do well to make the best of it. I think you don’t realize how fortunate you are in some respects. And if you have it in you to write you’ll write wherever you are. Now, unless you’re hoarse from your tirade, let us get on with Madame de Rémusat.’

## X V

GEORGIE died when he was six years old. Never robust, although well enough for a time, the wretched conditions on the grape farm had sapped his vitality, and diphtheria

made short work of him. He was staying with Mrs. Atherton in San Francisco when he was stricken, and died a few days later.

George also was never to recover from the Oroville experience. He had a bad attack of rheumatism, the result of malaria, and then developed a stone in the kidney. Until he got rid of it, months later, I was often up night after night applying hot compresses and dropping morphine, which I made him drink, as I hadn't the nerve to puncture him with the hypodermic needle.

Otherwise life went on its monotonous way. Long rainy winters. Long hot summers. A growing discontent, and desire to see 'life.' We spent a part of one winter in town with my grandfather, and although I was still under a cloud, a few hostesses had recovered from the shock, and Mrs. Atherton entertained a good deal for Florence. I accumulated four devoted admirers, and, taking a firm stand with my husband, permitted them to call in the afternoon and evening. I was determined to study such material as came to hand, to say nothing of gratifying my vanity, and desire to have an amusing winter. But I paid the price! Whenever they were there George stalked up and down the hall, looking coal-black, or hung over the banisters muttering. For the sake of peace I returned to the country before the winter was over.

One of my quartette had afforded a certain excitement, however. He was a New Yorker visiting in San Francisco, and being an eligible bachelor, was much sought after. It amused me to worry match-making mothers and anxious daughters, and it is to be confessed that I gave him a good deal of encouragement. At first he really interested me, for he had lived in Paris for the greater part of his life, and been a friend of the Prince Imperial and the Empress Eugénie, whom he claimed to have assisted in her flight to England. A man of the world at last!



But if the native product was easy to manage even by a tyro like myself he was not. When George was far enough removed – at the head of the stairs for instance – he made as violent love to me as a man may when he is unable to lift his voice, the door is wide open, and the object of his passion is seated quite three feet away. He was a small dark man approaching forty, who always looked on these occasions as if he were about to explode. I thought him rather funny, but was deeply interested in what he would say next. I knew he wouldn't do anything, with George in the offing, likely to swoop down at any moment. Really, George displayed more self-control at this time than I would have given him credit for.

But finally I realized that the man was dangerous. He began to talk wildly about challenging George to a duel and killing him; he 'had fought innumerable duels and was a dead shot.' One evening he came, looking white and desperate, and in a febrile hissing whisper implored me to elope with him, threatening to kill himself if I did not. I was really frightened, but hastily decided there was only one way to get rid of him and that was by lacerating his vanity so deeply that his passion would splutter out.

'Listen!' I said. 'I am going to tell you something and I want you to understand that every word of it is true. I intend to be a novelist and I've only been making a study of you. You are not interesting in yourself, but through you I have learned something of the world outside of California and of men of your type. But even from the writer's point of view you don't interest me any longer. You've become a bore. I think you'd better go now. If you don't, I'll call my husband and he's very dangerous when roused. He'd merely laugh if you challenged him to a duel, laugh, and put a bullet in you without any ceremony. Then there would be a scandal. I don't want any scandals. You're not worth it. So be kind enough to go.'

He had stared at me incredulously during the greater part of this harangue, for he had thought me a simple unsophisticated young creature who must succumb to his blandishments in due course. When he realized the awful truth: that he had been disporting himself under a microscope for the education of an embryonic novelist, he turned as black as George, and for a moment I thought he would assault me. I was about to call for lawful protection when he seized his hat and rushed from the house.

He did not kill himself. He got very drunk. For three days he was quite happy in imagining himself the Prince Imperial redivivus. And then his host, one of my quartette (he never spoke to me again), packed his clothes and put him, still drunk, on a train for New York. So ended my first experience with a man of the world.

## X V I

Not long after, I 'got' another story. It had no relation to anything in my personal experience, nor in my multifarious reading, nor to the two other books I had written. But my fiction tract has always been erratic. I have never known what it would do next. During the winter I had met Lotta, who was visiting friends in San Francisco. We were sitting in a box at a *matinée*, when she turned to me and said kindly: 'I hear you want to write. Let me give you a piece of advice. Take some one line and stick to it. Don't take up one phase of life after another, but identify yourself with some particular scene and type - such as village life, for instance. Or, if you prefer it, San Francisco society. But be known for a particular *line*. Critics and public like to know where they are with an author just as they do with an actress. To this principle I attribute my own success.'

Time proved the worth of her advice, but she might as

well have addressed the winds of San Francisco, which blew from all points of the compass at once. Perhaps it was the instinct of the explorer, which, if I had been a man, would have driven me into the exciting field of archæology, or because my fiction tract was uncontrollable, but every book has been an adventure, a new plunge, with few exceptions, into uncharted seas. To have 'followed a line' would have been to invite a boredom which might have extinguished the writing faculty altogether, even had I been capable of making the effort.

This new book that popped out of the unknown was a story of reincarnation. The scenes were laid in Paris and Wales; an added incentive, for if I couldn't travel in distant lands I found almost as much satisfaction in writing about them. It was a wild yarn and written off at white heat. We now had a woman cook (the last Chinaman had turned out to be an escaped convict, and Mrs. Atherton who always engaged our servants when in town, had provided us with a middle-aged female warranted free of all vices). She occupied the spare bedroom and I turned the little room on the back porch into a study. George, encouraged by the failure of my second effusion, let me alone for the most part, although he grumbled at my 'desertion,' as ever. However, this was during the summer and he had other companions. Besides, although still jealous of my work and books, it was no doubt a relief to see me occupied with anything so incorporeal; at least there was no man in the offing. Perhaps the family consoled themselves in a like manner. They had begun to regard me as 'dangerous'; my New Yorker had made no secret of his infatuation; and Mrs Atherton lectured me on the duties of a wife and the dangers of compromising myself out of vanity and love of admiration. But although I still sat on the veranda several times a week, and George insisted upon going up to the Big House every night, when we didn't dine there, no

mention was made of my writing. It might keep me quiet, and be the lesser of two evils, but not for them to encourage a propensity which at any moment might plunge the family into another unsavoury notoriety. Even Alex, with whom I was once more intimate, preferred to talk of other things.

I have said I wrote that book at white heat but, even so there were interruptions. It was the custom during the warm season to leave one's front doors open, and neighbours wandered in at all hours, beginning at ten in the morning. If I were not in the living-room they rambled about until they found me. That I was writing a book made no more impression on them than if they had discovered me in the far more startling occupation of beating eggs for a cake. It seemed to me then that my greatest ambition was to become so famous that no one would dare intrude on my privacy.

To insure it for the present I took to writing at night, and although George's indignation reached a new climax, I locked the door of my little room, and if he pounded on it I never heard him.

The book was finished at last. One of the friends I had made during my sojourns in town was Helen Grant, a New York girl who was spending a year in California. She visited me in the country and I went to her house whenever I was in town. It was her brother who suggested the title from a line of Hamlet's soliloquy: *What Dreams May Come*.

I sent it to Henry Holt. He returned it with a few kind words. It had interest and promise, but he could not afford to shock his readers. It seems strange in these days of licence that anything I could write at that time could shock the most conservative of publishers. But it shocked others besides Mr. Holt, for, this time, undaunted, I sent it to every publisher in the United States. It returned with painful regularity. Some were more than shocked. They appeared to be quite indignant. My 'central theme was too much for

any sane person to swallow.' This was shortly before the organization in London of the Theosophical Society and reincarnation was practically unheard of. For that matter, the word itself had not come into use, and I used the old alternative, metempsychosis. A few years later the market was flooded with 'reincarnation novels.'

Helen encouraged me in the belief that my book must find a haven at last – when we were not quarrelling over Henry James. We were both in love with him! As he looked dark in his pictures I maintained that I had the best hope of winning his affections – did we ever meet! – as I was a blonde and she a brunette. Then she came down one day with a copy of *Roderick Hudson* in her hand, and pointed triumphantly to a line in which the heroine was almost gloatingly described as having 'a mass of dusky hair over a low forehead.' I gave up. Helen had a mass of dusky hair – with a wave in it and reddish-golden lights at that – which she arranged softly on a low forehead. Years after, when I met Henry James at a garden party in London, I told him the story of this old rivalry and my final capitulation, I wish I could remember his reply. But it was so involved, there were so many colons and semi-colons, so many commas and dashes, with never a period, that by the time he had finished I was too bewildered to do anything but stare at him, and to this day I do not know whether he was pleased or not.

## XVII

THE time came when I could stand Menlo Park no longer. I hated it as I have never hated any place since. I hated everybody in it – George most of all. I even hated the beautiful wood, where I walked for hours at a time, dreaming my dreams of a future when I should be free to live my own life; or hidden with a book in a little clearing in the underbrush, secure from interruption.

As far as I know there were no newspaper women in San Francisco at that time, but I told George that if he didn't move to town I would leave him and work at something; I didn't care what. I could live with my grandfather.

By this time when I put my foot down George knew that I meant what I said, although as a rule I merely pursued my own way with as few words as possible. The threat proved effective. He offered me the alternative of a winter with his mother in the house she had built on the corner of California and Octavia Streets, but I would have none of that, and found a flat farther out on California Street. I had an efficient young housemaid named Hannah who offered to do all the work including the cooking.

I went little into Society, for I couldn't afford it; it was all I could do to get enough money out of George for running expenses, and I doubt if I should have succeeded if I had not enlisted the services of Mrs. Atherton; what she said to him I never asked, but she always had her own methods of bringing him to heel.

But I cared little for Society and had many compensations. I could see my friends constantly, and they formed the habit of meeting in my little parlour every fortnight to discuss the new books: the two Kaufman girls, Rosa Barreda, Julia Peyton, and Maude Howard. Finally one of them suggested that we meet at night and enliven our gatherings with men. Then I could imagine myself at the head of a *salon*. The men were Shafter Howard, Jack and Gus Casserley, and a Dane, Georg Meinicke. Out of these informal and somewhat pedantic meetings (at which I had to do all the work until I felt as if I were keeping a night school) grew the famous Fortnightly Club which flourished for many years.

Despite my *salon* several admirers (same performance as before), the libraries, and the heavenly knowledge that I was free of Menlo Park, I was still restless, still devoured

with a curiosity which nothing in my present life could satisfy. One of my friends was Sibyl Sanderson, and we used to take long despairing walks over the steep hills of the city, wondering if we should ever get out of it. She wanted to be an opera singer and her father wouldn't hear of it. A few years later she was the rage of Paris and Massenet had written *Esclarmonde* for her début. At that time, however, life seemed a dreary waste, and particularly to me; Judge Sanderson might in time succumb to her pleadings, but there was no hope for me as long as George was alive.

It was during the year or two that I lived in this little flat that I had an amusing experience with Joaquin Miller, who, when in the height of his fame, and always dressed as a cowboy, had made an immense sensation in the East and in London. He was now living in retirement on a hill across the bay, facing San Francisco. Quite recently he had written a poem on the passing of Tennyson, which I cut out of the local paper and sent to the New York *Critic*. I still think it one of the most beautiful tributes to a great man ever written. I summoned my courage and wrote him a letter expressing my enthusiasm; he replied with apparent gratification, and I invited him to call on me. An afternoon was appointed. When Hannah had ushered him into the parlour she came back to me with her face very red from suppressed mirth. 'Oh, ma'am!' she giggled. 'But he's a sight! All the children on the sidewalk were hooting at him, and he's dyed his hair!'

I went into the parlour. He had struck an attitude, and gazed at me silently as I entered. In truth he was a singular figure, and I didn't wonder that he had made a sensation in London, for the English like Americans to be as different from themselves as possible. He wore a black broadcloth suit, the trousers tucked into boots – with high heels! – that reached almost to his waist. His shirt had no collar but his

neck was encircled by a lace scarf. On his head was a sombrero, which he removed with a sweeping bow as I entered, and I saw that his long hair, touching his shoulders, was grey on top, and ended in a series of stiff 'rat tails' that were dyed a bright orange.

I told him how glad I was to see him, and we sat down. Still he had not uttered a word. An American woman is always willing to bear the burden of conversation, and I rattled on, although growing disconcerted by his persistent silence and his round unwinking stare. Finally I said tartly: 'Have you lost your voice? Suppose *you* say something for a change.' He fetched a sigh that might have come from the soles of his cowboy boots, and then his voice rumbled forth heavy-laden with tragedy. 'What a pity!' he groaned. 'What a pity we are both blondes! O-h-h-h, I would like to go up and take God by the beard!' And he raised his arm and waggled it as if in performance of the act. I repressed the obvious retort, and five minutes later he shot out without a word of farewell. But I was quite satisfied. It was my first experience with a genius; and no lion I have ever met has roared more accommodatingly.

## X V I I I

I WROTE articles for the papers and the *Overland Monthly* at this time, and although the remuneration was not startling I managed to buy myself a new frock occasionally. I also expanded *The Randolphins* until it was long enough to be published in book form, and sent it to Scribner's - of all publishers! It was returned with an accent of chill disapproval. I was by no means satisfied with it myself, and it was not until many years later that I rewrote it again and published it under the title, *A Daughter of the Vine*.

My grandfather had taken a house on Hyde Street, an old house in a garden. Muriel spent a good deal of her time



there – when she was not with Mrs. Atherton. The two grandmothers were very jealous of each other. I had little to do with her bringing-up, which no doubt was fortunate for her. Aleece was growing up with a promise of beauty, but although Daisy had lovely eyes and complexion her nose was too large for her face. Still, she had as many beaux as Aleece and came very near making a good marriage. During this time she was desperately ill with rheumatism following pneumonia, and the doctor gave her so much morphine that she bade fair to become an addict. My mother cured her, however, after her recovery from pain, by gradually decreasing the dose and finally substituting water for the drug.

I had some trouble with one of my own admirers. Despairing of ever seeing me alone he wrote me frantic love-letters, which I read by the kitchen stove, thrusting the leaves in one by one as I finished them, and listening for George's warning slam of the front door. The man was fool enough to confess his infatuation to his wife and she went to bed and lamented her sad fate to her friends. Heaven knows she was welcome to him. He wrote a novel about me called *The Lady Without Mercy*, but as it was very bad it never found a publisher. After his death, his wife, then coruscating among the literati of New York, tried to have it published for the money it might bring in, although the story of his mental infidelity was quite well known in her circle, and it would have made her rather ridiculous. A minor publisher finally accepted it, but, shortly after, I happened to meet him, and from that time on the manuscript was lost. 'I knew it was a libel as soon as I laid eyes on you,' he told me. 'The woman of that story was a cold heartless coquette, and one has only to look at you to realize that the man must have been mad with his own conceit.' So much for being a blonde! As this kind publisher never had any warmer feeling for me than friendship he kept his illusions.

But that was a year or two later. Meanwhile I filled my life as best I could, but it seemed to me a mere chromo of what life should be.

One highly welcome diversion occurred, however. It was in the autumn, I think, that Charleston, South Carolina, was visited by a terrible earthquake. It wrecked the city and brought destitution to many. California was particularly sympathetic with earthquake victims, and Mrs. Hall McAllister, then leader of San Francisco Society, conceived the brilliant idea of organizing a benefit which should take the form of a minuet danced on the stage of the Grand Opera House by twelve of the city's most prominent men and twelve of its young and prettiest women. The Opera House was large, the tickets would be expensive, and the proceeds for the sufferers should reach an imposing figure.

Several members of my *salon* were among the chosen: the Kaufman girls, Rosa Barreda, and myself. There were one or two others belonging to the sacred preserve, but for the rest Mrs. McAllister was obliged to make an excursion into what may be called the second set, in which, if the truth must be told, there were far more pretty girls than in the Society that ignored them. But Mrs. McAllister was out for success, and as others of her own set refused haughtily to 'exhibit themselves in public' – despite the fact that her own daughter Marian was to take part – she gleaned where she could, and several triumphant young ladies, stunningly handsome, were the result.

The men were Hall McAllister, leader of the San Francisco Bar, and whose brother, Ward McAllister, was at that time illustrious in New York as leader of the 'Four Hundred'; W. H. L. Barnes, second only in eminence (an old beau of my mother's by the way); Lieutenant Bently Mott, U. S. A.; George Davidson, son of our leading scientist; the Dane, Georg Meinicke; Charles Webb Howard, also a leading citizen, and others of varying achievements.

We were paired off according to height, and I drew W. M. Pierson: 'the handsomest man at the Bar,' as Mr. McAllister crossed over to whisper in my ear at the first rehearsal, doubtless as consolation for not having drawn himself.

George disapproved. Mrs. Atherton disapproved. So did all the family save Alejandra, who gave me my costume. But I wasted no time discussing the matter.

A French dancing-master taught us the steps of the minuet, and it was amusing to witness middle-aged men like Mr. McAllister and General Barnes concentrating their weighty brains entirely on their toes. More than once those toes were rapped unceremoniously by the excitable little Frenchman. If some of us had expected to amuse ourselves with flirtations during these rehearsals we were quickly undeceived, for not only was the instructor a stern task master, but Mrs. McAllister kept a sharp eye on every one of us. We were there to learn and to give a creditable performance on the great night, and even the handsome imported brunettes could do little but roll their fine eyes at the eminent.

We were all to wear white wigs and long gowns of brocaded silk. Mine was white with a pale blue panel up the front. George was furious when a man came to make me up. It was the last straw, for no Atherton had ever defiled her face even with powder, much less rouge. He refused to go to the performance and sulked for a week.

But even with the pink on my cheeks and red on my lips I drew a despairing sigh when I entered the dressing-room of the Opera House, and even Mrs. McAllister's, 'How sweet you look!' by no means consoled me. Beside those dashing brunettes in their gorgeous colours, their brilliant dark eyes and black eyebrows in magnificent contrast to their snow-white wigs, I was convinced I looked washed out, insignificant. I had always longed to be a brunette, with Spanish dusky hair, and never more so than now. How-

ever, blonde I was and a blonde I must remain to the end of the chapter. My hair grew no darker with the years, but, to the horror of the family, I had some time since invoked the aid of an eyebrow pencil, although I used no other make-up.

The benefit was an unqualified success. The Opera House was packed from parterre to roof. Mr. McAllister, a fine figure in his white wig and black satin knee-breeches, led the procession on to the stage with his stunning partner, almost as tall as himself, and danced the minuet as nonchalantly as if his mind had never risen above his feet. I fancy we were all pretty badly frightened at first, but we must have acquitted ourselves creditably, for even Mrs. McAllister praised us. Our curtsies, so deep that we almost sat down, were accomplished without disaster. Heaven knows we had practised them hard enough – accompanied by excoriating remarks from the impatient little Frenchman. The older men must have congratulated themselves that bending stiff knees was no part of their exacting duties. It was enough to toe the mark! George Davidson, the most intellectual of the young men, told me unblushingly that he practised his steps before the mirror in his bedroom. Poor fellow, the most promising young man of his day, he came to a tragic end. He had studied law at Harvard and great things were expected of him. But he suddenly lost his power of concentration. The printed page became a blurred sheet. No doctor could even guess the source of the trouble, and in despair he hanged himself. A few years later any oculist would have treated him for astigmatism.

Mrs. McAllister gave us a congratulatory luncheon at Miramonte, her country place in San Rafael, and a happy family disbanded.

## XIX

It was less than a month later that Sibyl descended upon me in triumph. Judge Sanderson had given way at last and she would leave within the week for Paris to study for the operatic stage.

I have never known any one quite so poised, so self-possessed, so sure of herself, as Sibyl. She had the lightest of lyric voices; she knew no one of influence in Paris; the opera houses were besieged yearly with aspirants from all over the world; and yet she had no more doubt of conquest than if her voice had been as great as Patti's and impresarios were scrambling for her favour.

'I shall succeed,' she said, as she stood there calmly. 'I shall be the rage of Paris. All I have to do is to find a composer who needs my voice, and the rest will follow.'

Sibyl, although she had the reputation of a beauty, was not one in the strict sense of the word. The lower part of her face was too heavy, and her nose and mouth were indifferently modelled. But her large luminous blue-grey eyes expressed all things, her skin was smooth and white and brilliantly coloured, her hair like burnished bronze, and her figure perfect; I doubt if a more beautifully formed woman ever lived. And she had style and a carriage both haughty and graceful. But I think her reputation for beauty was owing more to her calm assumption of indubious pulchritude than to any physical perfection. She entered a room with the air of one born to be stared at and admired, and not one thought of doing anything else.

'Of course you will succeed, and get everything else you want,' I assented warmly. 'What else was Nature thinking of when she made you? But I could hate you all the same. You'll get there long before I do.'

Sibyl was always sympathetic. She was intensely selfish, possessed an iron-jawed will, and refused to cultivate a

remarkable intelligence into an intellect—I don't think she ever read anything but French novels as long as she lived—but I have never had a more constant and understanding friend. 'Cheer up!' she said. 'One never knows what's round the corner. Yesterday papa was as pig-headed as ever. You may have a book published before I make my *début*.'

Prophetic words. One of the greatest crises of my life was fast approaching.

## X X

STRANGE are the vagaries of fate. A nephew of Mrs. Atherton, Alberto de Goñi, was an officer in the Chilean navy, and commander of one of its men-of-war, the *Pilcomayo*. It had been ordered on an easterly cruise, when, at the last moment, the order was abruptly countermanded and the *Pilcomayo* sailed on a visit to the port of San Francisco. By the possible caprice of some unknown Chilean admiral the course of my own life was changed, and I found myself, in so far as is possible in the complicated web of life, the mistress of my fate.

Mrs. Atherton entertained the officers constantly; I think they dined at her house every other evening. George was with them morning, noon and night, showing them the town, made one of them on the ship. Mrs. Atherton gave a ball in their honour. It was a brilliant affair, one for which the new house was admirably adapted. There was a great hall in the centre, with a gallery running round the second floor, where those who did not care to dance could watch the scene below.

Instead of wearing the conventional ball dress I appeared in a gown of fine white camel's hair, with a bunch of dark blue asters at the waist line. There was a temporary revival of bustles and full skirts, but this original conception of

long flowing lines fitted every part of me like a glove and ended in a train. As I stood in the receiving line, it was sufficiently observed! Dowagers with acres of white-washed flesh (my mother's Cameline, no doubt) bulging above corsets so tightly laced that one could detect a gentle puffing, hips as large as their bustles; girls in voluminous tulle; all looked me over disapprovingly and only refrained from sniffing out of a due sense of decorum. They probably liked my coiffure as little. Hair was worn in a Langtry knot at the base of the head, a French twist, or drawn up to the top and elaborated with false puffs. In spite of family remonstrances I had for years worn my hair coiled about my head from the base of the skull almost to the forehead; not so much from a desire to be eccentric as because I thought it becoming to my profile.

When the arduous duty of receiving was over I went into the library, where Mrs. Atherton chose to spend the evening. She said with a sigh: 'Very pretty, but no the dress for a ball. Why you no can be like anyone else? What you do next, I wonder? Poor George!'

The most beautiful woman at the ball was Mrs. Hall McAllister, who looked like a French marquise, with her white hair piled high, her jewels, and a gown of white brocade trimmed with point lace. She had starry grey eyes, the features of a cameo, and the most perfect manners of any one I have ever known. Her sense of humour had saved her from shock when the authorship of the *The Randolphs of Redwoods* was revealed. She was always charming when we met, and I had been one of the first she had invited to dance in the Minuet. To-night she sat in the gallery surrounded by a court, and no girl could dim her light, although her daughters, Marian and Edith, were strikingly handsome girls.

Alex wore black velvet, put on anyway as usual, but no one saw anything but her immense blue unfathomable eyes;

even a strand of loosened hair wandering down her back didn't matter. Elena, in silver brocadé, was lovely, as ever, with her sweet chiselled face. Jeannie Selby, now 'Mrs. Faxon,' always looked like a pocket Venus, and Florence, surrounded by aspirants, was radiant in pink. San Francisco has always been famous for its beautiful women, and then even more than now.

A few days later George began to mumble apologetically that Alberto had invited him to return to Chile as his guest on the *Pilcomayo*, and he really would like to see his birth-place once more; and all his relations, to say nothing of a godfather who might remember him in his will if he saw him again.

I was full of matrimonial wisdom by this time, and knew that if I were complacent nothing would budge him from my side. I therefore opposed the plan violently. It was his duty to stay where he was and do something to increase our income. The estate had been divided, but what with the deductions – including the monthly allowance on which we had lived for several years – we were no better off than before. The family had many business friends; if he were really not too lazy to work, some one of them would give him employment. And what was Chile? Who ever heard it mentioned outside the family? He should be thankful to have got out of it.

He turned black and glowered. No wife should dare use such language to her husband, but I was no kind of a wife anyhow. Chile was a great country, he'd have me know, and he was proud to have been born in it. And I'd shown no aversion to Chileans, he'd noticed. I'd married one, and I'd flirted abominably with Alberto.

'Well,' I retorted, watching him anxiously, 'he's worth two of you, for he is somebody and you are nobody. If you have any pride you will stay here in San Francisco and make something of yourself.'



He went.

Mrs. Atherton saw to it that he left me with a monthly income that enabled me to live on in the flat in the same modest fashion. She was opposed to his going, but never could deny him anything; only once had she been insensible to his cajoleries, as will be seen later. I was reasonably content, for this mild phase of freedom was better than nothing.

## XXI

GEORGE had been gone for about two months. I was still in bed one morning and had just glanced over the newspaper when there was a ring at the door bell. A moment later I heard Rose's voice. What could she be doing out here at eight in the morning? Some one ill at the house? And then I heard her ask Hannah in a deep lugubrious Irish voice: 'Haven't you seen the news?'

I sat up in bed. I knew at once what had happened. George was dead.

She came into the room looking as if arriving for a wake, enjoying herself thoroughly. 'You mean to say you haven't seen it?' And taking the paper from my hand, she pointed to a small paragraph on the third page.

It was written in an off-hand manner by some shipping reporter who was evidently under the impression that he was dealing with stale news as far as the death was concerned. 'The embalmed remains of George Atherton arrived last night from Tahiti on the schooner *Tropic Bird*, consigned to Macondray & Company. As the schooner arrived ahead of time, the family was not at the dock to meet it.'

'Your mother had a headache and couldn't come out,' said Rose. 'And it's steamer day and Mr. Franklin has to go early to the bank. So she sent me out as she knows you never read the papers carefully. You're a cool young one,' she added indignantly. 'You don't even look excited.'

'Perhaps I am stunned,' I said diplomatically. 'But you'd better go home and get breakfast. It was good of you to come.'

She departed muttering.

With remarkable presence of mind I sent Hannah off to get me a mourning hat and veil. It was summer and Mrs. Atherton had returned to the country; I knew I must go down at once, and wrote a telegram, announcing that I should take the 3.30 train to Menlo Park, for Hannah to dispatch.

Several of my friends came out in the course of the day, and one or two who were friends of the family but had never honoured me before. They stared at me avidly in order to report to others how I had 'taken it.' Odd how vulgar the supposedly well-bred can be when the brain is itching with curiosity. But they must have gone away with little material for gossip. I was very pale, but they knew I had recently recovered from an attack of Oroville malaria, and if I was composed that might be owing to reaction.

I took Muriel with me to the country to sleep with, for I had an uneasy idea that George would haunt me if he could. I was not naturally superstitious, but mediums were continually writing to my mother to come to their séances, as they knew from conversations with the spirit world that she was one of them and needed only to develop her powers; relatives and friends were also clamouring to meet her again. But she would have none of them. She always maintained that she saw Mr. Uhlhorn standing at the foot of her bed on the night of his death, and that was enough for her. Whether there was anything in spiritualism or not I neither knew nor cared; the subject did not interest me. But I took Muriel along.

A good many persons I knew travelled on the 3.30 train to the country, and I fancy some of them were amused at my prompt and rather previous assumption of the widow's

veil. But I stared stolidly out of the window, and except for a word in passing they let me alone.

The char-à-banc met me. I managed to slip into the house unnoticed, and went directly to Mrs. Atherton's bedroom on the ground floor. I knew that whenever she heard bad news she always tore off her clothes, got into bed, and screamed until she was exhausted. By this time the paroxysm would be over, and I welcomed the darkened room.

She was alone at the moment and moaning as I entered. But she sat up in bed, embraced me fervently, and consoled with me for now being a widow like herself. I wished I could squeeze out a tear. But I had long since lost the power to turn on tears at will, or to cry at all. When I was twelve an oculist warned me that I must never cry, for my eyes were in a dangerous condition and I would go blind if I did not take the greatest care of them. I had already spent three months in a darkened room, and his words so terrified me that they must have created a permanent inhibition, for I have never shed a tear since.

I spent most of my time with Mrs. Atherton while I remained in the country, for I knew the others were watching me like hawks. They were quite aware that I had no love for George, but if I manifested indifference to his untimely end I should be accused of bad taste, and if I looked too solemn I should be condemned as a hypocrite. How I managed to steer between those two shoals I never knew, for diplomacy was not my strong point, but I somehow emerged unsmirched from the ordeal.

It was impossible not to feel sorry for George. It is every one's right, great or small, whether he die prematurely or at the end of his natural span, to pass into the unknown with reticence and dignity. But here there was more farce than tragedy. The schooner that carried the explanatory letters had been passed by the *Tropic Bird*, and it was not until three days later that we learned the particulars of his

death, and then they were grotesque rather than sad. As he was a guest on the man-of-war, it was decided by Goñi and his officers not to bury him at sea, but to ship him home. They knew nothing of embalming, so they doubled him up and put him in a barrel of rum! There he tossed about in the hold of the ship until it reached Tahiti, when they had some difficulty in finding transportation for the body, owing to the superstition of sailors. Finally they invoked the aid of the English Governor, Mr. Brander, and the captain of the *Tropic Bird* agreed to undertake the commission. The barrel was carried on board surreptitiously at night; the next morning it was buried under a cargo of coco-nuts and the sailors none the wiser.

Soon after the arrival of the letters I was sitting by Mrs. Atherton's bed when Muriel ran into the room and thrust something almost into my face. It was a piece of coco-nut. The horrid idea occurred to me that it might have been cut from one of those identical coco-nuts and I left the room hurriedly. It was years before I could even look at coco-nut again.

Alberto had written to Lawrence, asking him to break the news to Mrs. Atherton; written in his imperfect English, he kept referring to 'the remnants'! Arthur Page, Muriel's godfather and an intimate friend of the family, received a letter from one of the officers, who gave the full particulars of George's death. He had left San Francisco in perfect health, but two weeks out developed another stone in the kidney. After an injection of morphine he had a violent hæmorrhage of the stomach and died immediately. 'Then we put him in the rum,' the letter concluded, 'and the sailors grumbled, for it came out of their rations. It would be as well if Mrs. Atherton would make it up to them.'

Barrel of rum! Coco-nuts! Remnants! Never had there been a more fertile subject for the cheap wits of the town. But the bare facts were but the foundation for grotesque

exaggerations. The stories travelled East, and by the time they reached New York I had been sitting on my veranda in the country one day when an expressman drove up with a barrel. Although I protested that I had ordered nothing of the sort, the man dumped the barrel on the veranda and drove off. I summoned the butler and told him to open it. He did so, and 'there was George!' So ran a story in one of the New York dailies years after, when I was supposed to have barely escaped drowning in a mountain lake.

A whole page of it. With illustrations horrid to behold. Poor George!

## X X I I

I REMAINED in the country until after the funeral, which, of course, the women of the family did not attend. Before I left I heard from Mrs. Atherton a disturbing piece of news. George, when he borrowed the money for the Oroville experiment, had turned over to her his entire interest in the estate as security. She had refused to sign it back when the estate was divided, reminding him that he had no sense of the value of money and that it was better off in her hands than in his. He must have sulked and scowled and cajoled, but for once she was firm. She had made him the same allowance as before, and a part of this sum she would now make to me; the rest would accumulate for Muriel.

I talked the matter over with my grandfather, and he advised me to see a lawyer. Even allowing for the sums George had owed the estate for his business ventures, his house, and his monthly allowance for several years, there should be a goodly sum left. And he was also disturbed at the thought that I should be so completely in the power of my mother-in-law.

I thought it over, but concluded to have nothing to do with the law. Lawsuits in California dragged on for years;

one had just been concluded that had lasted for thirty, and then there was nothing left to divide! I had no intention of being anchored for years in San Francisco, wearing out my youth and energies, for a paltry sum of money, which, if I ever got it, would come too late to do me any good. I felt the power within me to make money for myself, but for that end I needed peace of mind, complete freedom, and a larger sphere. Moreover, I liked the Athertons and hated rows, a form of drama that never appealed to me. No, I must get away, and as soon as I could manage it; so I turned my back on the law and all its entanglements. I have never regretted that decision.

Lawrence had been appointed Consul-General to France, and shortly after George's death he left for Paris with Alex and Nina Macondray, Elena's eldest daughter. As I stood in the small crowd seeing them off I had a singular experience that was to recur in my life many times. I was not there. Neither I nor these others was really alive. Life was a dream and nothing happened. Perhaps . . . if human beings actually existed, it was in a state of suspended animation where they dreamed throughout eternity.

This sense of the unreal often visits persons in moments of great trouble or disaster, sometimes of triumph and extreme happiness. But at all the sudden and surprising shocks of life I have felt more than ordinarily alert, and quite myself. It is only in ungenerative moments that this feeling of unreality takes possession; that reality is a bubble which may burst at any moment. It often lasts for long periods. Possibly it rises from the same source that has always made me feel a spectator of life, never a part of it.

It was necessary that I fully regained my health before starting forth upon my great adventure, and I went up to Skaggs Springs for a course of sulphur baths. I returned as strong as ever, and braced myself for a tussle with my mother-in-law. It was quite possible, of course, that she

would threaten, and from the best of motives, to cut off my allowance if I persisted in a course that to her would seem little short of insanity. So sheltered a life had she led, so utterly devoid of contacts with self-supporting women – beyond governesses and music teachers – that the idea of a woman of her family going out into the world to seek her fortune would revolt her fastidious soul.

She had returned to town and I went to see her at once. She was sitting in her big bedroom upstairs idly watching the passing show on California Street, and quite alone, as she so often was. She welcomed me warmly, complimented me on my improved appearance, and settled back in her easy chair for a long welcome gossip.

‘Black very becoming to blondes,’ she remarked, ‘but I hope you no wear the widow’s ruche, for look like a sign hung out telling other mens you in the market once more.’

I reassured her. We exchanged a few amenities, and then I plunged.

It was a long hard battle. It was not until she got over the first shock that it was possible to reason with her. I argued that talents, however unladylike, were given for use, and there was no market in San Francisco for mine. Once more I was informed that ladies in Spain did not write. ‘But they do elsewhere,’ I pointed out, ‘and you see their books everywhere, even in your own house.’ ‘I no believe the womens can write,’ she retorted. ‘Si all were known, you find the mens write those books for them.’ I felt like asking her if she thought George had written *The Randolphs*, but concluded it were best to avoid that subject. Then she had an inspiration. ‘That orreebly George Eliot! Living with a man who no is her husban’. I hear she living with him so he can help her write the books. Si she no write she may have been good woman.’ Such logic was difficult to refute, but I replied patiently that there were no scandals

about other woman writers, so far as I knew. Look at the New England group. The word proper was inadequate.

She tried another tack. 'I no can bear think of you alone in New York. So child you are still, and always taken care of. What you know about the world and the great cities? Terreebly things happen to you. I am fond of you like my own child, and I can no bear think of you in danger. Why you no come live with me? I like it si you do, for I am often lonely. Florencia she have so many friends; Elena, she have her children, and now Alejandra go to Paris. Si you and Mural live with me, you have no expense and all your allowance for the pocket.'

But a life of luxury and idleness had no allure for me. I should have preferred a romantic garret or a vicarage in a graveyard made immortal by the Brontës. I was wise enough, however, to say nothing of my love of writing, of my desire to have a career. She had a keen sense of the value of money, for all her sheltered life, and I harped upon the certainty that I could make it. There could be no doubt that other women novelists were well remunerated for their efforts, nor was there a whisper that any man, husband or lover, did the work. Most of them were old maids, stranded in some manless village.

She gave way reluctantly, but made the condition that I should leave Muriel – her favourite grandchild, now that Georgie was dead – with her. 'Si you do,' she said, 'I leave her in my will what I leave George si he living.' I had no intention of taking Muriel with me, for on my small income it would have been impossible to give her the comforts and advantages to which she was accustomed. But I made a condition of my own. She must be permitted to see my mother constantly and stay with her occasionally. I fancy that my mother had never quite loved any one as she did Muriel, who gave her a last vital interest in life. As I have said, both grandmothers were very jealous of each other.



If my mother made Muriel a beautiful frock Mrs. Atherton bought her an expensive one. My mother immediately made her a smart coat and bonnet, and so it went. Mrs. Atherton consented after some demur, but she was a just woman according to her lights, and an honourable one; when she made a promise she kept it.

But if she agreed to continue my allowance she would go no further; she was generous and close by turns; the last when taxes or too much entertaining with its consequent bills induced not only a fit of economy but one of near panic. There were times when she was convinced that she was on the verge of ruin, and talked earnestly of cutting down her large staff of servants, although she never did. Possibly too she thought that if I could not raise the money for my travelling expenses I would give up in despair and accept her offer.

## · X X I I I

My grandfather borrowed a thousand dollars for me from the Theological Seminary. He too was disturbed at the thought of my unsheltered life in a distant city. When men went forth to seek fortune they came West. Why was I always in the reverse? But he had never denied me anything for long, and his faith in me was as great as my faith in myself, although he did not admit this until he gave way altogether. 'But I do hope,' he said solemnly, 'that you will seek to do good with your writings. A gift is a grave responsibility, and much for the benefit of mankind may be accomplished by the conscientious writer. Take a high moral tone and seek to make the world better.' I repressed a shudder, and replied evasively that I always had to write what came to me. It was there before I knew it and did as it pleased. This argument made no appeal to him, and in his driest tones he reminded me that I generally managed to

get my own way; it was odd if I could not control my own mind.

He knew me well enough, however, not to pursue the subject further, but he would borrow the money only on condition that I took Hannah with me. He would have no peace of mind if I set forth entirely alone on my adventure, and Hannah was both a sensible girl and a good friend. And so it was arranged.

But at the very start of my new life I made one great mistake. Some years before, the Barredas, a New York family of Spanish blood, had lost an immense fortune and come to San Francisco to live. They had had a great house in New York and another in Newport, now owned by Mrs. Astor. To-day, Mrs. Barreda, her three daughters, and young son, lived in a small shabby house with one servant, but San Francisco Society had received them with enthusiasm. The bond between Mrs. Atherton and Mrs. Barreda was the Spanish language, and South American affiliations. They were inseparable friends. Mattie, the eldest of the girls, a brilliant creature and an invalid, was a close friend of mine. Rosa was a member of the *salon*, but I found far more companionship in Mattie, whom I saw nearly every day. Both she and her mother wanted to send me 'right to Mrs. Astor,' who would receive any friend of theirs with open arms, and be my guide and protector in this 'wild adventure I was set on.'

At that time I knew little of the snobbery of the world. It hardly existed in San Francisco, where everyone knew everyone else so well that incomes were a matter of indifference and the poorer members of Society were invited as often as the rich. No one stood in awe of wealth, and if some of the newer rich had made their way into Society, their inordinate fortunes were rather against them than otherwise and gave them no social power. Even family, now that Southerners had faded into the background, was

less discussed than of yore. The Athertons could not be called snobs; they were so sure of themselves that they never gave the matter a thought, and if they had prided themselves upon their exclusiveness in the days of many 'loose fish,' their circle had grown with the expansion of Society as a younger generation grew up and Easterners like the Barredas came with letters of introduction; it was long since they had referred to the meagreness of their visiting list.

But I had had enough of Society, which seemed to me the most tiresome body of persons that could be gathered together, and I wanted to see something of that glamorous Bohemia of which I had read so much. Moreover, I suspected that Mrs. Astor, if Society women in New York were anything like those of San Francisco, would have little use for writers, especially when they had less renown than her own chef. Doubtless, if out of affection for the Barredas, she took any interest in me at all, she would try to find me a husband, and do her best to persuade me that writing was unbecoming in a lady. I wanted no more obstacles. Therefore, I declined the honour, and of course it was a mistake. Whatever her attitude, she would have given me prestige and a background; I should have been 'placed,' given a definite social rating, not been regarded as a rank outsider.

So, in mid-autumn, I set forth on my great adventure. Florence was the only one of the family to see me off, but all my other friends were there, save Mattie Barreda who was on her back in a plaster cast. My grandfather, his hands clasped behind him, looking sad and tired; walked slowly up and down the platform. To have a last word with me was impossible, surrounded as I was by chattering young people. I never saw him again.

## BOOK III

### I

THE most exciting thought in my mind when I arrived in New York was that I now should meet publishers face to face. Of course I had the manuscript of *What Dreams May Come*, dignified by four years of travel, in my trunk, and although I had little hope that any one of the publishers who had declined the honour of presenting it to the world would relent, I determined to call on those whose letters had been the most friendly. I wanted not only to see what the genus was like in the flesh but those establishments where the fate of authors was decided.

We went from the train to the Brevoort House, recommended by some friend of my grandfather, but it was too expensive for a permanent abode and I must look for a small apartment without delay. The first thing I did, however, was to order visiting cards inscribed *Mrs. Atherton*. For eleven years I had been called 'Mrs. George' by all who knew me; never should *that* happen again; and I felt a new sense of dignity, to say nothing of importance, when those cards were delivered. Hannah, on her own initiative, bought a white ruche and sewed it in my bonnet, and although at first I protested, remembering Mrs. Atherton's caustic remark, I finally succumbed, as it was vastly becoming. Besides, my conscience was clear. Heaven knew there was nothing I wanted less than another husband.

I called on Henry Holt. He was a handsome man, very charming. He complimented me on my 'colonial profile,' but held out little hope for the book. It was too 'wildly improbable,' too 'unbridled.' Not a novel the American public expected of its authors. He doubted if any publisher

would risk it. But he advised me to keep on writing, for he thought I had ability.

I called next at the House of Harper, an interesting old barrack in Franklin Square with elevated trains rattling by the windows. Henry Harper received me in his dingy office – all editorial offices I soon discovered were dingy – and I asked him impulsively if he would not reconsider his decision. I had waited so long . . . I wanted to get started . . . and particularly under the auspices of his house. He must admit that the book was original or it wouldn't have been refused with indignation and protest by every publisher in the United States.

The word original was a red rag to the American publisher, but this one happened to be very kind, and no doubt sympathetic with young aspirants, for instead of annihilating me with a glance or looking pokerish, he explained that all books submitted were passed upon by three readers and he was compelled by the laws of the house to abide by their decisions. 'Let me show you,' he said; it was plain that he too had impulsive moments.

He sent for a large book in which the verdicts of the readers were recorded, leafed it rapidly, and laid it on the table before me. I read the opinions of my book by those three anonymous fates. They were certainly 'unfavourable!' As I raised my stricken face from the tome, his own face flushed, the tears came into his eyes, and he exclaimed: 'You see, Mrs. Atherton, I cannot publish your book! I wish I could! Indeed I do!'

Had I but known it I had accomplished a more striking feat than getting a mere book accepted. I had brought tears to the eyes of an American publisher.

'But don't despair,' he said, as I rose. 'The traditions of my firm do not permit me to publish your little book, much as I should like to for your sake. But you may have better fortune with one of these newer firms that are unhampered

by traditions. You might try Belford, Clark & Company – although, of course,’ he added conscientiously, ‘the name would give you no prestige. And the first step counts, you know, in a young author’s career. Perhaps it would be as well to wait, and write another book. You are four years older than when you wrote *What Dreams May Come*. The next should be better in every way. I shall be glad to consider it.’

I thanked him for his kindness and told him I never should forget it. And I never did. No one felt more regret when that dignified old firm lost control of its business, agitating the publishing world of the United States, its proud inheritors reduced to the level of clerks by the arrogant millions of Wall Street.

## I I

NEW YORK was not the magnificent city it is to-day. The buildings were comparatively low, and there were endless monotonous streets of brownstone houses, so confusing that I never knew whether I was walking north, south, east, or west, and was continually asking for guidance. I had been told that nobody knew the name of his next-door neighbour, and judging from the stern unfriendly faces whose owners stalked by me on the street, I could well believe it. Everybody looked absorbed in himself and bent upon getting somewhere in the shortest possible time.

But this was not the most disturbing of the less personal impressions. It seemed to me that I never heard any word uttered but ‘money.’ Did I pass any man on the streets talking to a companion, on the steps of an hotel, in the crowded ‘Els,’ in a restaurant, the word echoed and re-echoed in my ears. It was a word that was taboo in San Francisco, save when necessity arose in the privacy of one’s family (I knew nothing of our business world), but here the very atmosphere was charged with it.

I took an intense dislike to New York, and, as Hannah had relatives in Hackensack, New Jersey, five days after my arrival I went over there – and took a house! And furnished it! But I soon tired of the daily trip back and forth, and three weeks later moved the furniture over to a small flat I had found in Fifty-ninth Street. This somewhat erratic behaviour Hannah advised me to keep to myself when I made friends later on. ‘They’ll think you’re queer in the head,’ she said grimly. ‘And I’ve heard that New Yorkers like people to be like everyone else.’

Prophetic words again.

Meanwhile I had found a publisher. I lost no time calling on Belford, Clark & Company, manuscript in hand. They had already brought out books by Edgar Saltus and other new authors (of a brief and meteoric career), and it seemed they had hopes of establishing a new precedent. It was a daring thing to do in those days and they didn’t last long. But I had taken my ware to the right place now. The book was accepted with enthusiasm, although an old Welshman, reader for the firm, wrote out eight pages of criticism, mostly verbal. I made the designated alterations with unaccustomed meekness, and he was so pleased that he patted me on the back and told me I was a genius!

The book went to press. I wrote in triumph to my family and friends in California, and received telegrams and letters of congratulation; one publisher meant the same to them as another. Alexander Robertson, now in business for himself, had provocative cards drawn and distributed them among his customers. Only the Athertons maintained a discreet silence.

My grandfather had given me a letter to Mrs. Burgoyne, with whom my mother had spent her vacations when at school in New York and New Haven. She had been a wealthy woman then, but she was far from wealthy now. Her husband had lost one fortune after another, and they

were living with their daughter Jessie and several sons in a boarding-house not far from their old mansion on Fourteenth Street, now given over to second-class shops.

They received me cordially and I soon became one of them. It was Jessie who helped me to find the flat. The old man had taken to drink, and the boys did what they could to support the family. Mrs. Burgoyne had been a belle and an heiress in New Orleans, had made the grand tour of Europe – a notable adventure in 1830 – and been accustomed to wealth for many years of her life. But she was as dignified and uncomplaining in her poverty as Mrs. Barreda, and Jessie was as bright a spirit and as full of courage as Mattie.

Of course Mrs. Burgoyne didn't approve of my determination to live alone, unprotected by even the dull respectability of a boarding-house, but she did not remonstrate very energetically. I think she rather welcomed the mild excitement of even that remote contact with a world of which she knew nothing save by hearsay, and wondering what I would do next. She was too proud to see her old friends and regarded me much as she would a new play for which she had an orchestra seat.

Mrs. 'Willie' Kip, daughter-in-law of Bishop Kip, and herself a member of an old New York family, was one of my mother's few faithful friends and it was not her fault that they rarely met. When she heard that I was going to New York she sent me a letter to her brother Edmund Clarence Stedman. I called on him at his bank in lower Broadway. He was very polite and agreeable, but that was the last I ever saw of him. A small, dry, conservative New Yorker, he undoubtedly disapproved of a young woman leaving her home in California and living alone in a great Eastern city. Unchaperoned, out for a career, with no social background. It took me little time to discover that belonging to the best Society in San Francisco cut no ice in New York. Our first



families had never been heard of. The very newspapers ignored California. I never saw the State mentioned save occasionally in the *Tribune*, whose editor and owner, White-law Reid, had married a daughter of D. O. Mills. I sometimes suspected that this deliberate silence was owing to the fact that at the time of the gold rush, followed by the popular stories of Bret Harte, California had been the most sensational State in the Union, with even New York compelled to take a back seat. And New York brooked no rival.

### I I I

I WAS quite happy in my little flat, my comfort and small income looked after by Hannah, who sternly repressed any tendency to extravagance. She was horrified at the prices of food and refused to buy either asparagus or salmon. In San Francisco these New York luxuries were peddled about the streets by Chinamen, in large baskets swinging from a pole balanced on the shoulder of the vendor, and the price so negligible that they were never served at a dinner party. 'Sixty cents for a bunch of asparagus! No, ma'am, you don't have it. Make up your mind to that.'

The book was published. Obeying a sudden freak, I signed it Frank Lin; not in honour of my grandfather, but of my collateral ancestor, Benjamin Franklin. 'What a name to choose!' wrote my more immediate ancestor. 'It sounds Chinese.'

But the publishers had left the public in no doubt as to my identity. In advance paragraphs it had been informed that the young, gifted, and beautiful author was a native of California and descended from one of its pioneer families (which I was not) and had come to make her home in New York and embark upon what no doubt would be a brilliant career.

Perhaps this ill-advised 'blurb' had something to do

with the reception of the book. Perhaps its pages revealed a personality that antagonized the critics. Perhaps it was an impertinence for a California writer to invade the sacred precincts, the more particularly as she had not made a reputation in one of the magazines. Perhaps it was merely because I was a woman and all the critics were men. Whatever the reason, that book had an extraordinary reception. I know now it was not worth the paper it was printed on. Its only merit was that it betrayed a certain originality in conception. It should have been dismissed with a paragraph if noticed at all. But it was greeted with columns of ridicule and even abuse. I was given to understand that I was not wanted, that there was no place for me in any walk of American literature, and the sooner I returned to my native wilds the better. The English in which these opinions were expressed was by no means classic.

I was more horrified and astonished by the lack of chivalry in these tirades than by the wholesale condemnation of the book. If their brains were too tired to accept a new idea they were hardly to be blamed, but why couldn't they be polite about it? The California men might not be intellectual giants, but a chivalrous attitude toward women was a tradition of the State, and it had never occurred to me that it could be different elsewhere. Several years later Ballard Smith, editor of the *New York World*, said to me: 'The average newspaper man is the lowest creature on earth; have nothing to do with him.' And so he was at that time.

No doubt those self-elected enemies of mine thought they had disposed of me once for all, that I would slink back to my 'native wilds' and be heard of no more. But they had on the contrary a tonic effect. They roused all my fighting spirit. Never would I give up. I would succeed in spite of them. I realized even then that the only revenge worth having is success. So, I immediately sat down and began another book, one that had been brewing for some time.

The day came when I met several members of that Bohemia of which I had dreamed while pacing my woods or listening to the rain pounding on the glass roof of my living-room during countless monotonous winters. It is not worth while to mention names. Suffice it to say that one brief tour of that coast was enough.

One woman, not ungifted in a facile way, held what she fondly believed to be a *salon*, and an acquaintance took me there one Sunday. She sat in the middle of the room in a gown of dingy white satin, unwashed hair, and a streak of grime on her neck, and laid down the law as to who was and who was not in the literary world of the moment. Her voice was uncultivated, her prose undistinguished, but she knew how to pontificate. She also had a good spread! Her 'Sundays' were always crowded. Young aspirants sought her favour, and it was known that she had a 'pull with the Press.' She was bursting with the consciousness of power.

I refused to be impressed. She began by patronizing me, and, with what in one to the manner born would have passed for graciousness, evinced an intention of taking me under her wing. But as my eyes grew mocking, hers grew hard; she finally turned her back on me and gave me one finger when I left.

I have forgotten the name of the woman who took me to that particular *salon*, but I remember her words as we walked up the street. 'You are not a very diplomatic young person, are you?' she said. 'On the threshold of a career it is wise to make friends, not enemies.'

'A friend? - of her?' I exclaimed with the scorn for which my grandfather had often reproved me. 'Why, even her enmity would be no compliment. She's a sham, and I hate shams.'

'All very well,' said my conservative acquaintance. 'But although she may be found out in time she's a star of sorts at the moment and has a large following. She's a great little

self-advertiser and knows how to put it over. And she's a vicious enemy. Nothing is easier than to make a friend of the vain – nor an enemy.'

'I'll make a friend of no one I despise,' I retorted grandly. 'Especially of one who looks as if she never took a bath nor washed her hair. And you succeed or fail according to what you have in you; I should feel humiliated if I owed anything to a vulgar little fakir like that.'

I had one or two other not unrelated experiences that cured me for all time of any yearning for 'Bohemia.'

Of course there was the Richard Watson Gilder circle that revolved about the *Century Magazine*, that would have shuddered at being called even Upper Bohemia, and was as exclusive as Mrs. Astor. But this circle was closed to me, for one of my cardinal sins was that I had not made my debut in the *Century*, *Harper's*, *Scribner's* or the *Atlantic Monthly*. All the leading authors of the day had emerged from one or other (or all) of those exclusive portals to make his initial bow as a full-fledged novelist; and to be received with acclaim or toleration by critics and public. If I had been known as a protégée of Mrs. Astor, no doubt they would have been at my feet.

## I V

ONE of the friends I had made in New York was Frederick M. Somers, who had been associate editor on *The Argonaut* when I wrote my first little articles, and with whom I had held a necessary correspondence. He called on me soon after my arrival and told me that he had made money in Wall Street, but as he had no desire for an inactive life he was considering 'three propositions.' What two of them were I do not remember, but one of them was a monthly eclectic magazine that should be both interesting and in-

formative, with certain original features that would distinguish it from *Littell's Living Age*. This idea appealed to me greatly, and I persuaded him to renounce the other two schemes in its favour. Shortly after, *Current Literature* was introduced to New York and it was a success from the start. Seldom has a magazine had a handsomer format, and it was readable throughout. Mr. Somers took on Jessie Burgoyne as a member of the staff and from that time forward she was able to add to the slim family exchequer.

Belford, Clark & Company failed and Mr. Somers offered to publish my new book. I called it *Hermia Suydam*. The scene was laid in New York, and the heroine, born ugly, inherited a million, and, with certain adventitious aids, less common then than now, made herself over into a beauty. That alone would have been enough to arouse the antagonism of the critics, but I went a step further. Her former life, cast among dreary little people, drab wives and drabber husbands, disgusted her with matrimony, but being of an adventurous turn of mind, she took to herself a lover! Never before in our canonical and chaste American literature had an ugly girl presumed to defy the initial decree of the Almighty, nor seek for knowledge outside of wedlock. I wrote the book more in a spirit of mischief than anything else. If they thought my first poor little effort 'immoral' let them have something unequivocal to rend with their teeth and claw with their talons.

*What Dreams May Come* had achieved something of a success in San Francisco, and *The Argonaut* asked me to be its New York correspondent. I wrote a number of letters, one of which described an Authors' Reading, where I sat in awed delight looking at such blinding lights as Mark Twain, Frank Stockton, Henry Cuyler Bunner, James Whitcomb Riley, William Dean Howells, and others that I, in common with the rest of the world, have forgotten. The meeting was opened by Bishop Potter, a cold, distinguished, infinitely

important-looking person, whose nightly invocation to the Power above was popularly believed to be: 'O Lord, thou makest the clay, but we are the potters.' It was a terribly dreary two hours I spent in that theatre, for authors are notoriously bad readers and these were no exception, but I wrote an enthusiastic letter which delighted *The Argonaut*. But that is not the point of this otherwise casual reminiscence. In one of those letters I took occasion to remark that I despised the Press, and added some caustic comments on critics in general.

*Læsae Magestatis!*

The Imp of the Perverse that drove me on to make enemies must have been, I think, a subconscious aversion from the 'easy game.' I know now, and doubtless in my depths knew then, that if I had managed to conciliate the critics, or if they had felt ashamed of themselves and relented, if they had faced about and smoothed my way, I should have lost all interest, possibly married, or turned to something more exciting than publishing books. Or, if the impulse to write was too strong to ignore, half the spice of a career would be gone if there were no hostile element to fight, no prospect of a long hard battle from which I should emerge triumphant and confound my enemies.

Not that I would advise young writers to cultivate this militant spirit! There were times when I regretted its indulgence myself, although, to be sure, the repentance didn't last long. I was sufficiently punished when *Hermia Suydam* came out. Mr. Somers had been one of the few who had admired (with reservations) the first book, and he liked *Hermia Suydam* still more. 'If you will only keep quiet, and leave the engineering of this book to me,' he said, 'I think I can steer it past the inevitable disapproval of the critics and work it up into a good sale. But for heaven's sake watch your pen.'

The book was published, announced by dignified adver-

tisements. I sat back and waited for the whirlwind. It came. The reception accorded my first was tender by comparison. The abuse was so venomous, vituperative, and personal, some of the comments so positively indecent, that two of the Burgoyne boys and another friend I had made rushed up to my flat that Sunday morning and offered to go down to Newspaper Row and horsewhip the writers; more especially the one who signed himself 'Nyn Crinkle' and had been particularly foul.

But I ordered them to do nothing of the sort. I had no wish to be made any more notorious than I was already. After they had gone I sat down and read those articles – they could hardly be called criticisms! – over several times, wondering if I were ruined for life, still more how any men could write in such terms about a woman. They might have been written by roughnecks whose major diversion was the prize ring.

Such language would not be permitted in any American newspaper to-day. The critics may not be more intelligent nor discriminating; they may have their spites and prejudices, their snobberies and timidities, but at least they write like gentlemen. Whether the influx of women into journalism has raised its tone, or the United States since then has emerged into a semblance of civilization, or has grown old and tired, even the Yellowest newspapers have a higher standard than, with one or two exceptions, existed in the late 'eighties. Moreover, men have grown accustomed to the competition of women for masculine honours – it took them a long time! – and if still agitated by sex-jealousy they betray themselves as little as possible. And the time has passed when a writer must make his or her *début* in one of the magazines known as the 'Big Four.' Nor does the imprint of one of the old publishing houses mean anything whatever. Conservatism has gone by the board.

MR. SOMERS was almost terrified. He had expected a certain amount of censure, but hardly that his one and only author – he never published another book – should be buried under columns of personal abuse. Nevertheless, he persisted and did work the book up into a fair sale. But the attacks did not end with the daily Press. The weekly papers treated me as news, and with equal malignancy. Of course, being a stranger in New York, and living alone, I was fair game. (I often wondered if Mrs. Astor knew what she had escaped!) And I had made by direct contact several implacable enemies. One was the unwashed lady of the *salon*, who contributed paragraphs to one of the most sensational of the weeklies, and took her revenge. Another was a charming and beautiful woman who liked *Hermia Suydam* so well that she wrote me a letter and then called. At her house I met some of the most prominent men of the city; she was the daughter of one of them and much admired for her conversational gifts as well as for her wide range of intelligence and personal fascination.

But she suddenly became obsessed by the idea that I had taken Edgar Saltus away from her.

I had met the man but once. He had expressed to his publishers a desire to meet me. Mr. Belford had given him a note of introduction, and he called one evening soon after I was established in my flat. He was a handsome man, very polished, and talked entertainingly of literary personalities and conditions in New York. But although I admired his books, which, if artificial, were inordinately clever, I found him subtly antagonistic. I did not like him and he must have liked me as little, for he never called again.

What happened to rouse my new friend's jealousy I never knew, but she so far forgot herself as to write insinuating paragraphs about her faithless admirer and me in the most



scandalous of the weeklies, and they certainly did me no good. She must have discovered soon after that Saltus took as little interest in me as I in him, for she called about a month later and apologized frankly; and even persuaded the editor of the weekly to recant. I forgave her, but any impulse toward intimacy had naturally been checked.

Alex had written repeatedly, inviting me to pay her a long visit in Paris, and I suddenly made up my mind to shake the dust of New York from my feet. 'I don't know that I'll ever come back,' I said to Mrs. Burgoyne, who sympathized with all my woes. 'No young would-be author ever came to a great city with higher hopes, and I've been treated like a common adventuress. I'll live in England where the libel law is not a joke, and whatever they think of me they'll take care not to print it.'

But in truth I was not merely disgusted; the spirit of adventure was stirring once more. I wanted something new, and all my life I had longed for Europe. I could not see Paris under better auspices than with the Rathbones, and, above all, I should be there in time for Sibyl's *début* at the *Opéra Comique*. I could not afford to take Hannah, but she had met the actress Sophie Eyre, who had offered her a position as personal maid. Hannah has always done well.

Perhaps I should add before closing this account of my first New York adventure that I had attained the honour of being interviewed. I remember the names of only two of my interviewers: Blakeley Hall and Julian Ralph, nice men, both of them, who wrote charming articles that may have done something toward stemming the adverse tide. But another described me as receiving him in a sky-blue satin boudoir, clad in a rose-pink tea gown, feeding a green poll-parrot, and I closed my doors thereafter.

## VI

THE Rathbones lived in a large apartment, running round three sides of a court, on the Champs Élysées. As the wife of the American Minister, Mr. McLean, was an invalid, they had gradually assumed the social duties of a legation. Alex, although she now weighed two hundred pounds, looked handsomer than ever, for she was obliged to gown herself properly, and a coiffeur had charge of her unruly hair. He dressed it in a simple, close (and tidy) fashion that showed her beautiful head to its utmost advantage.

An unfortunate incident occurred on the very day of my arrival. The Paris edition of the *Herald* came out with a two-column letter from its New York correspondent, scathingly devoted to me and my books. The editor felt worse than I did when he discovered that I was in Paris and whom I was visiting, for Lawrence Rathbone was a personal friend of the owner, James Gordon Bennett, besides being Consul-General from the United States. He wrote me a note of apology and sent me a potted plant!

Lawrence was terribly upset. Fond as he was of me personally, he felt keenly the stigma of being so closely connected with any one who wrote. That was bad enough in all conscience, but to have a sister-in-law's literary delinquencies gloated over by every member of the American colony was almost more than he could endure. But Alex treated the matter as a joke, and he recovered in time. Nor was his standing affected in that hard-boiled, world-weary American colony. If they read the letter they forgot it promptly.

Life in a Paris household was full of queer contradictions in those days, and no doubt the Rathbones' was typical. There was champagne every night for dinner but not a crust in the apartment if one were hungry between meals. There was a butler and a footman but no bath. Just beyond my bedroom in one of the 'ells' was a large empty room, used

for the storing of trunks, where a bath was brought from outside when ordered well beforehand. It was an event of ceremony. Two men arrived at the designated hour, carrying a long zinc tub that looked like a coffin, which they disposed upon a platform in the middle of the room. They were followed by three others, laden with tins of hot water and packages of bran. The inside of the tub was lined with a sheet, the hot water tempered to one's personal preference, the bran sifted in. The men with many bows retired, and one climbed into the tub, holding one's breath, terrified lest one make a false step and tilt the whole thing over.

There one soaked for two hours. As the ceremonial bath was an expensive luxury one ordered it seldom and made the most of it. Between times I did the best I could in my bedroom with a sponge, but never felt really clean, save at these long intervals, during the months I spent in France.

I enjoyed the beautiful springtime in Paris, the galleries, all else that delights the wondering novice visiting for the first time that historic treasure-laden city, enjoyed meeting the many persons of all nationalities that were entertained in the apartment, but for once I was more interested in another than in myself. In a few short weeks Sibyl would make her début in grand style and after much heralding. Little else was talked of. Alex, who had never liked her, was sure she would fail. Lawrence, for dissimilar reasons, bet heavily on her triumphant success. Of course there was no doubt in my own mind. It was unthinkable that Sibyl should meet with anything but uninterrupted good fortune.

But she had a serious rival, no doubt of that. A short time before, Emma Eames had made her début at the *Opéra* (Grand Opera House) as Marguerite, and both critics and public had gone wild over her. She was a beautiful girl, with a voice like liquid silver – and of grand opera volume. But if Sibyl's was a light lyric it was of an unusual timbre and range. Massenet had trained it up to high G! To be

sure it was so far off when it got there that you couldn't hear it, but as publicity it was unique.

And her publicity had been admirably managed. Great things were expected of her. Her beauty was extravagantly admired. She looked the Parisian born. She had that air of *autorité* that on the French stage is one of the essentials of success. Above all, Massenet, the most eminent French composer of his day, had written a new opera for her début. He had been enchanted to find a phenomenally high voice once more, for Heilbron, upon whom he had relied for years, had died shortly before Sibyl's arrival in Paris. Such voices – high, sweet, true, poignant – were rare; rarer still were they accompanied by those other advantages possessed in so generous a measure by 'la belle Sibylle.' All Paris, I found, was divided into the Eames Camp and the Sanderson Camp.

Directly across from the Rathbone apartment was the rue Lincoln, a short but fashionable street, and here Mrs. Sanderson lived with her four daughters, Sibyl, Jennie, Marian and Edith. I went there every day, and listened to all Sibyl's hopes and fears. She was afraid of the critics, for their lady-loves resented the fact that she had captured the personal affections of Massenet as well as his professional enthusiasm.

And they were all for Emma Eames!

But on the whole she had lost little of her supreme confidence in herself. Her moods of depression were merely temperamental.

Massenet was a charming creature, volatile, effervescent, as playful as a child. He had large sparkling hazel eyes, a fine brow, straight nose, and the most mobile of mouths. He and Sibyl and I – and her French poodle Manon, a hideous shaven little brute with a huge pink bow in her ruff – had some delightful picnics in the country by the Seine; and one night he took me to hear his oratorio *Marie Madeleine*. I paid for my ticket, however!

Although Massenet was infatuated with Sibyl he showed her no consideration professionally. He rehearsed her for hours at a time, even in the apartment, until she would fall fainting or weeping hysterically on a sofa and Mrs. Sanderson would beg for mercy. But whatever faults Sibyl may have possessed, laziness was not one of them. No budding prima donna ever worked harder.

## V I I

THE great night arrived. Not the 'first night' familiar to Americans, but the *répétition générale* (grand dress-rehearsal attended only by invited guests – and the critics). It was on that momentous occasion that the fate of a new prima donna or a new opera was decided.

Tickets were begged, bought, or stolen from the fortunate recipients. It was the year of the Exposition, and Paris was full of Americans, all of them passionately desirous of being present on the exclusive night, to see with their own eyes another of their countrywomen blaze forth in the operatic heavens.

We had four seats. Alex declared herself too nervous to go, so Lawrence, Nina Macondray, and I left her at home in suspense and took the wife of a San Francisco newspaper proprietor, for purely diplomatic reasons.

The opera was *Esclarmonde*, very gorgeous in *décor*: Romanesque-Byzantine. Sibyl, always strikingly handsome, was breath-takingly lovely in a crown a foot high, and gowns as gorgeous as the scenery. There was not a tremor in her sweet pure voice and it soared like a bird's. I cannot say that it was a very interesting opera, and, in truth, it had but a short life. There was little plot, but I suppose the frantic and almost continuous love-making was relied upon to cover other deficiencies. Of course it was full of melody

and even Massenet had never written more emotional music.

The audience seemed interested, and responded obediently when the hired claque led the applause. But I kept one eye on the critics, who all sat together, and I saw no enthusiasm in those sharp cynical faces. They sneered, they looked bored, and I feared for the morrow. I only hoped they would be more decent in their obsequies than my own batch. One could generally rely upon the renowned French politeness (except in the shops when one didn't buy anything) and their passion for style. Still, they might be all the more deadly for that.

I went behind the scenes after the performance was over, but Sibyl was too nervous and exhausted to talk beyond asking me in a hoarse whisper to come over in the morning.

We were rather depressed after we had left our guest at her hotel, for (perhaps because we had been so keyed-up with extravagant expectations) there had been a curious sense of flatness throughout the evening. The libretto had bored us, the claque had been almost feeble, as if bribed to do its worst, the audience had been little more than polite, and we feared the critics.

### V I I I

I HAD just awakened next morning when I heard the pitter-patter of short steps in the long corridor leading to my room. A second later Alex opened the door, her eyes very big, her arms full of newspapers.

'Read these!' she exclaimed. 'This is the last of Sibyl!'

I snatched the papers from her and glanced hastily over the articles she indicated. Snickers. Ridicule. Pens tipped with venom. All expressed in the most perfect French but offering Sibyl up on a platter, disembowelled and dismembered. She had no voice. She couldn't act. Well that she

had not made her *début* in the *Opéra*, for it was difficult to hear what she was trying to sing even in the *Comique* – and why was that classic building put to such base uses? Massenet was treated with some respect, but no encomiums were wasted on his latest *opus*. He was too great a *maître* to attack openly, but one could read between the lines that they had ached with boredom.

For the moment I hated Alex, sitting there, smiling triumphantly, her worst hopes verified. I shooed her out and dressed myself hurriedly, then ran down the stairs and across the Champs Élysées, dodging cabs with cursing drivers, although they would rather run over you than not, for they got all the damages and you the hospital bills.

A red-eyed maid admitted me and I went into the *salon*. Newspapers were scattered all over the floor. Mrs. Sanderson was weeping. The three younger girls were huddled together in a corner, looking white and frightened. Striding up and down the room was Massenet, literally tearing his hair. When he caught sight of me he ran forward and seized me by both arms.

'Sibyl is ruined – ruined – ruined!' he shouted, and then his voice broke into a wail. 'This is the most terrible day of my life!' He began pacing up and down again, waving his arms. 'Ruined! Ruined! Her career ended last night! And I too am ruined! All my hopes were on her and she has failed me!'

I could stand no more, and stamped my foot at him. 'You are a brute!' I cried. 'A selfish male brute. Instead of bucking her up you think of nothing but yourself. *Your* work is over. *She* has to make the same effort four times a week. And you blame *her*! You know she was exquisite last night. Even you could find no flaw – and who cares for critics?' I turned to Mrs. Sanderson. 'Where is Sibyl?' I asked. The prostrate mother waved a feeble hand, and I opened the door of Sibyl's bedroom and closed it behind me.

She was lying on the bed, on her face, in an attitude of complete abandon, sobbing convulsively. This was no time for sympathy. I gave her shoulders a vigorous shake and exclaimed, 'Sibyl! I am ashamed of you. Why should you – *you* – care for the worst those miserable hirelings can do? You know their motives. You expected this. So did everyone else. Who will pay any attention to them?'

'Oh, you don't understand! You don't understand!' she wailed. 'No singer, no actress, can survive with the critics against her. I don't know anything about American critics, but they rule our destinies in Paris. I am ruined! I'll break my contract! I won't – won't – sing to empty seats.'

I leaned over and pinched her throat. 'When they slit this and cut out your vocal cords you will be ruined but not before. Now, listen to me. I don't know what power they may have in an ordinary season, but Paris is so packed with visitors to the Exposition that they are sleeping wherever they can find a bed. Every theatre, both opera houses, will be filled nightly. You have a God-given opportunity to make your own reputation. Americans never read the French newspapers, and the others will be too busy. They'll make up their own minds about you and pass the word on. There can be only one verdict. In a month you will be the fashion, and the critics gnashing their teeth. You will not only conquer but you will establish a new precedent. Then you will be doubly famous. If I were in your place I should rejoice in the opportunity. . . .'

I heard a noise behind me and turning saw Massenet in the doorway. I hissed at him and he was about to retreat when Sibyl sprang from the bed. For a few seconds I had the impression of being in the path of a cyclone. Flying ornaments and furniture. Raucous shrieks. Whirling arms. Massenet shaking as if he had been attacked by *paralysis agitans*, and gasping for breath.

'I hate you!' screamed Sibyl. 'It's all your fault! You



could have bribed those men! And you have done nothing but whine over your stupid old opera!' She flew at him. He gave a leap backward, pulled the door to behind him, and an instant later I heard the sound of racing feet and a distant slam.

Sibyl dropped into a chair, tears running down her face, rocking herself to and fro. '*Mon maître! Mon maître!*' she wailed. 'He'll never forgive me! He'll never come back! He'll hate me!'

'No, he will not,' I said. 'He'll come cringing back like a whipped dog to lick the hand of the master it adores. And it will do him good. He's acted like a brute. . . .'

'He's not a brute!' Sibyl glared and screamed. 'He's a great man, and I won't hear a word against him!'

'Well, he's an angel then. But go to bed now and stay there until to-morrow night, and then do your best.'

I went through many such temperamental scenes with Sibyl, and she grew more and more unbridled, yielded more and more to all the wild impulses of her nature, as the insolence of power, the freedom of her position, and flattery, incense, adulation, shattered whatever inhibitions she may have inherited. She had feared her father, but he was dead, and she feared no one else on earth. Her early downfall was no fault of the critics.

What I had anticipated came to pass. The *Opéra Comique* was crowded every time she sang. The penetrating sweetness of her unusual voice, her authoritative beauty, her skill as an actress, made her the fashion before the season was half over. The French themselves quickly forgot the adverse criticisms and pronounced her a great artist. As time went on she became the idol of Paris, and one of the most brilliant figures in Europe. Massenet wrote *Thaïs* for her and Saint-Saëns *Phryné*, both of which roles she sang in the Grand Opera House. For nearly ten years she had no rival in her own sphere, but her triumphs should have lasted for twenty.

## I X

I WENT to balls, dinners, and musicales; the Rathbones entertained constantly, their Thursdays were crowded, but I met no one who interested me. Even cosmopolitan Society was much like any other, concerned chiefly with gossip, scandal, charities, dress, the new play. Emma Eames and Sibyl Sanderson were discussed threadbare.

Of course I was far too critical, but I had some impossible ideal, and was always expecting to find it around the next corner. Even in fashionable Society there are always highly intelligent men and women to whom this phase of life is a pleasant relaxation. But it takes time to discover them, segregate them from the mass, and in Paris at least I had neither the time nor the opportunity.

One Thursday a Baron Something called with his American wife. 'You'd better cultivate them,' whispered Alex hurriedly. 'I believe they have a literary *salon* and that would be nice for you.'

So I took them in hand; they proved to be a charming couple, already felt an interest in me, and invited me to their next Sunday evening *soirée*.

I had some trouble inducing Lawrence to take me. That I should go by myself was unthinkable; save as far as the rue Lincoln I was not permitted to go out of the house alone. When I protested that I had been married for eleven years and was now an independent widow, Alex replied satirically that if I would continue to look eighteen and less like a married woman than any one she had ever seen, I must take the consequences. As long as she was responsible for me I should be as severely chaperoned as Nina.

Lawrence liked the baron and his wife, but he had never accepted any of their invitations; 'literary *salon*' had an ominous sound in his ears. But he finally consented to take me if I would promise not to stay more than an hour.

With high expectations I arrayed myself in my most becoming costume: a *décolletée* gown of black velvet, and a headdress that I fondly believed made me look like Pauline Bonaparte; I had copied it from one of her pictures. The original was of cameos, a circlet bound about the brow, and a comb that confined the hair, which was drawn up from the nape of the neck, the ends curling and falling forward over the comb. I had no cameos, but I had had a band of black velvet embroidered with pearl beads, and a black comb, that tilted backward, looped and threaded with them. Alex, in the hope that I might succumb to fashion, had directed her coiffeur to dress my hair in the prevailing mode, but it did not suit me; she was forced to acknowledge that it did not, and resigned herself to my hirsute divagations as best she could.

We sallied forth, Lawrence looking rather glum.

The baron's apartment was very small. We entered an ante-room and I laid my cloak on a pile of other feminine wraps, while Lawrence divested himself of his top-coat in a corner as barren as mine was overflowing. Then he put his head through the door of the salon and drew it back hastily. 'Oh, my God!' he muttered. I looked over his shoulder. There was not a man in the room but the baron. And all along the four sides was a dado of fat women, very *décolletée*, some of them bejewelled. Whether they were literary or not I never knew. They looked merely bored.

The baroness came forward and led me to an empty chair between two of those appalling females, and I sat for half an hour exchanging an occasional remark about nothing, and wishing I were dead. True it must be that some persons will go wherever they are invited; otherwise there would be many empty *salons*.

Lawrence and the baron had disappeared.

I was beginning to wonder how early one could decently assure the hostess of having had a wonderful evening and

go home, when the horizon suddenly brightened. The baroness, who I thought had forgotten my existence, stood before me and beside her was a man whom she was apparently delivering into my hands. He was anything but handsome: tall and very blond, with a long colourless face that looked like a codfish crossed by a satyr. But he was the only man present, and was as welcome as manna from heaven. As I was the only young woman in the room, no doubt I was as welcome to him, and he confided to me shortly after that he hated fat women.

His name was George Moore.

We had an immediate topic of conversation in a woman I had met in New York who wrote very bad novels but had an extravagant admiration for his. He was so tall that the back of my neck began to ache, and I suggested that we go into the dining-room, where he could sit down. There we talked for three hours.

We soon found a bond of sympathy in our treatment by the critics, for although his were obliged to express themselves with a certain reserve they had left no doubt in the reader's mind that they thought his books dull, immoral, and unnecessarily realistic – which heaven knows they were. He had been distinguished by censorship and banned by the libraries. Most of his life had been spent in Paris, apparently Flaubert and Zola were his idols, and there was no doubt that he had one or both in mind when writing his novels. He talked as well as he wrote, and told me something of his life in Paris; several of the incidents I read later when other works as personal as his *Confessions of a Young Man* were given to a delighted world and all critics had forgotten their former stupidities.

The baroness, some time during the evening, informed me that Lawrence had gone home quite early with a headache, but would send the footman back for me. The man was sound asleep in the ante-room when I was ready to go,

shortly before midnight. I knew that I was in for a scolding but did not care in the least, for I had enjoyed myself thoroughly.

## X

THE next morning I heard the familiar pitter-patter in the hall, and this time Alex burst in with immense angry eyes. 'I have just heard the most dreadful thing!' she gasped. 'Lawrence says you went off into a room alone with a man who was arrested in London for writing *obscene literature*!'

'It was his publisher, not he, who was arrested,' I said meekly. 'And we went into the dining-room, where we sat in full view of all those hens in the *salon*. I assure you nothing could have been more proper.'

But she was little placated, and I dared not tell her that George Moore intended to call on Thursday; he would have called sooner if I had not managed to head him off.

On Thursdays Alex always sat on an ottoman in the *grand salon*, and rarely spoke more than a word or two to the guests as they filed past her. She was painfully shy and it made her look cold and haughty, whereas she was merely shivering inside and wishing the ordeal were over.

I hovered near the door and seized George Moore as he entered, steered him behind Alex, who fortunately was looking the other way, and hid him behind the piano. I told him hurriedly what had happened, that my people were frightfully conservative, and didn't approve of writers, anyhow.

'Then I can't come here again,' he said, after he had delivered himself of a few pertinent remarks on the subject of conservatives. 'But can't I meet you somewhere? You must have a dressmaker. Go there to-morrow morning and I'll meet you outside and we'll take a walk.'

It took me some time to convince him that I was not permitted to go out alone. 'And besides,' I added, 'I am

leaving in a few days. I'm going to a convent in Boulogne to write a book.'

'Good! I'll see you there. I know those convents. There are no restrictions placed upon boarders. We'll walk on the ramparts and I know a charming little restaurant.'

Why had I told him! Merely out of a romantic sort of pride. I had always wanted to write a book in a convent – why, heaven knows. But I shuddered at the vision of George Moore's face on one side of the wicket and a nun on the other!

'This is a Sacred Heart convent,' I replied hurriedly, 'and they are very strict. Besides, you are far too distracting. How could I write a book with you in Boulogne? And my sister-in-law! If she heard of it! She'd bring me back to Paris or send me home.' I was saying whatever shot through my worried head. 'I shall be there only for a few weeks. Then I go to London. You will be there too. So please be good!'

'I suppose I shall have to,' he grumbled. 'I never heard such nonsense in my life. I had always pictured California as the land of romance, freedom, and every unconventionality, and it seems to be more slavish to Mrs. Grundy than middle-class England. But if you want to write your book in peace I've nothing to say.' (He smiled understandingly.) 'I'll go now. This atmosphere, even with you, would stifle me if I stayed any longer. But I've brought you this and I want you to read it before we meet again.' He handed me a copy of *The Mummer's Wife*.

'Oh, thanks!' I said fervently, and thrust it inside the piano.

The crowd was now dense and I got him out, still unperceived by his lawful hostess.

She knew, however, that he had been there, but instead of expressing the cold annoyance I had expected, thanked me for my consideration in sparing her the indignity of meeting him.

## X I

THIS is how I came to go to England.

Someone in New York told me of a London publisher who was hospitable to American novels, which he brought out in paper at two shillings, and I had sent him my two little battle-worn ventures. Shortly after my arrival in Paris he wrote me they were already in press and sent me a cheque for the magnificent sum of forty pounds; it was his custom to buy outright.

Only a fortnight before my meeting with George Moore I had received a letter from the English critic and poet, William Sharp, that thrilled me to the core, for it was the first recognition of any sort I had received from a member of the writing fraternity, to say nothing of its contents.

He praised *Hermia Suydam* with something like extravagance. He ventured the prophecy that I was the 'coming American woman,' one who understood the meaning of true realism and had the courage to depict it. He should write a review of *Hermia Suydam* for the *Spectator* immediately. Then he went on to say that he would have called in person but was leaving for England that afternoon, and he hoped I would reply favourably to the note from his wife which he was happy to enclose. Mrs. Sharp had written inviting me to visit them in London and begging me to set an early date.

I was so excited that I did not sleep for two nights, and Alex was calmly delighted at this first note of recognition. She had never heard of William Sharp, but if he wrote for the *Spectator* he must be respectable, and she advised me to accept the invitation. Although she had no use for writers herself and no doubt fervently hoped I was the only one of the species she would ever be forced to encounter, she sympathized with my interest in my own kind – far in advance of me as most of them were!

So, after some further correspondence with Mrs. Sharp,

a date six weeks later was agreed upon. Lawrence shook his head. I had met an English duchess. Why hadn't I wangled an invitation out of her? London Society was the greatest in the world. But I was not interested in English duchesses. They could come later. Besides, I had met too many French duchesses and they usually wore red wigs (on one side), and made up their faces but forgot the back of their necks. Their '*hôtels*' were dreary and dark – unless they lived in *entre-sols*, off a court, which were drearier and darker still.

When I had made up my mind to write a book in a convent a friend of the Rathbones took me to call on the Mother Superior of the Sacred Heart in Paris. After looking me over and making sure my credentials were in order, she gave me a letter to the head of the establishment in Boulogne.

A night or two before I left Paris the Whitelaw Reids came to dinner. He was the first American Ambassador to France, and the Colony had talked for weeks of this signal honour bestowed upon the United States. I believe it was the first time a European state had thought us worthy of anything better than the humble legation.

It was to be a quiet family dinner; no one but the Reids and George Smalley, the London correspondent of the *New York Tribune*.

We received them in the *petit salon*. Whitelaw Reid was a very handsome man, tall, impressive, and made a dignified and no doubt efficient ambassador. But he was, it would seem, in no ambassadorial mood that night. As he was introduced to me he started dramatically, clutched his mane of white hair with both hands, backed away, and minced about me in a semi-circle.

'I'm not going to pull your hair, if that's what's the matter with you,' I said tartly. 'I don't suppose you wrote those reviews, and anyhow they were not as vulgar as some.'



‘Then I am forgiven?’ Still dramatic. ‘I assure you I was afraid to come here to-night!’

The dinner was not much of a success. Alex never did talk, and Mrs. Reid barely opened her mouth. To be sure Mr. Reid talked incessantly – he appeared to be in the highest spirits – but there were times when we wished he would borrow some of the reticence of his wife. What had led up to one of his quaint sallies I do not know, for I had fallen into a fit of abstraction, but I emerged to hear him remark: ‘Yes, Smalley,’ he said, ‘you were the most colossal snob and the most monumental cad that America ever sent to Europe.’ And he threw back his head and shouted with laughter.

He had placed us in a fine quandary! If we laughed we’d offend Smalley, whose face, black as thunder, had visibly elongated, and if we didn’t join in that heartfelt mirth we’d offend the First Ambassador from the United States.

I think the best we achieved was a sickly grin. Lawrence, ever diplomatic, gracefully changed the subject. Poor Smalley looked as if he had lockjaw for the rest of the evening.

## X I I

NOTHING could well be more uncomfortable than that convent. My room was stuffy with ancient brown hangings over the narrow high hard bed as well as on the windows and door, and I found a bedbug the first night. The fare was so unpalatable that I lived principally on buns and chocolate found in a neighbouring shop. We took our meals in a small dark dingy dining-room, and the other boarders were four or five Englishwomen of uncertain age, one of whom had a heavy grey beard and moustache. It was patent they regarded me as an intruder and only rarely condescended to address me. That, however, disturbed me little.

But the convent was as picturesque as the most romantic

could wish. It was an old palace of Henry VIII, built about several courts, on one of which my room was situated. When not at work I spent hours on the ramparts or rambling about the old city.

The nuns were very kind, and happy as all nuns are. They are probably the only authentically happy women in the world, for they have got what they want. And the world, with its cares, its disappointments, its ambitions petty and great, its struggles and futilities, flows past them unheeded. They live for the life to come, and meanwhile they are happy in having found their true vocation on earth. One of these nuns was young and handsome. She told me that she had begun life with a fervid desire to be an actress, but, thwarted by her parents, had soon discovered the vocation for which she was predestined. She was a lively and charming companion.

I wrote *Los Cerritos* there, the romance of a Spanish-Californian girl who lived near the San Antonio Mission on the (rechristened) Milpitas Ranch, and the owner, an unhappy millionaire who already had a wife. It did not amount to much, but I wrote it with a certain fervour as it dealt with the wrongs of helpless squatters at the mercy of the rich. Like the two preceding books, it was very short, and in less than a month I had finished the rough draft and was glad to see the last of that convent and start forth on my new adventure.

## XIII

THE Sharps received me with great hospitality, and their house in Hampstead was pleasant and comfortable – with a bath! There was a long drawing-room across the front of the second floor, well adapted for entertaining. Elizabeth Sharp was a tall fine-looking woman, as comfortable as her house. I felt at home immediately.

William Sharp would have put anyone at ease, for he was more like a rollicking over-grown boy than a distinguished man of letters. A big loose-limbed Scot, with a florid mobile face, stone-coloured hair brushed up from the brow, and eyes sparkling with animation, he was an arresting figure in any assemblage. He was a little given to posing, but so, I soon discovered, were a good many of the English literati. There was one woman – who had been divorced by three husbands, leaving a baby planted on each – who used to disconcert me by thrusting forth a rigid arm as if to hold me off, and staring mutely out of hollow burning eyes. She was the tragic queen of private life and her stage was St. John's Wood.

A few days after my arrival the Sharps gave me an afternoon reception. A number of the current literary lights were there but I remember only a few of them. London, then as now, was full of minor celebrities, unknown to the outside world. Some years later I suggested to a host that it would be a charity to send a list of the guests to mere visitors, who knew of only the outstanding luminaries. As it was, I used to come home from every one of those literary or artistic gatherings and sit half-undressed on the edge of my bed, looking them up in *Who's Who*.

Richard Whiteing was there, a big man with a leonine head, who appeared to be pleased when I told him that he looked like Charlotte Brontë's 'Rochester'; Amy Levy, a poet of great promise, who soon after died a tragic death; Louise Chandler Moulton, who also had a *salon*, and who took an immediate dislike to me because heretofore she had been the only American writer in whom the Sharps had shown a warm interest. As may be imagined, she turned a cold ear to their encomiums on my humble efforts. In fact she sniffed. A central figure was Mona Caird, who had captured the attention of blasé London the year before during the 'silly season' – i.e. the late summer when Parlia-

ment has risen and Society with it – by a series of articles in one of the newspapers on the poignant subject, ‘Is Life Worth Living?’ and had recently written a very bad novel. There were also critics, editors, artists, one or two actors and actresses, several members of the ‘Celtic Revival,’ writers galore.

And Thomas Hardy.

He came late, and Mrs. Sharp, after she had disentangled him from his breathless admirers, led him over to me; politely shoos every one else away.

He sat down beside me, dropped his hands on his knees, and stared into space. A small delicate-looking man, with an almost excessive refinement of feature, and an air of gentle detachment. What was I to talk to him about? He certainly looked as if he would give me no help. I was not awed. I seem to have been born without awe – save in the presence of mountains or great architecture – but I wanted to interest him. He was the first authentic literary celebrity I had ever met. George Moore at that time was a mere notoriety, and William Sharp had not yet awakened that other self of his, Fiona Macleod.

I floundered about, broaching one subject and another, but he never even glanced at me, much less made any response to my embarrassed efforts. He appeared to have fallen into a reverie, quite oblivious to his surroundings. Then, heaven knows how – I raked my memory afterward, but could never solve the riddle – I lighted upon cable cars in San Francisco. Abstraction fled. His face lit up. He turned to me eagerly. He asked me a hundred questions. I answered them as best I could, for it may be imagined how much I knew of engineering and mechanics. But at least I could describe those handsome shining cars with their ‘dummies,’ gliding up and down the steep hills of my city filled with the beauty and fashion of San Francisco, as they were at that time, for horses would have turned double back

somersaults had they attempted to rival the humming cable.

A fortnight later I met him at a reception given to me by Mona Caird, where he drifted in, looking absent and weary as usual. But he no sooner caught sight of me than he was at my side, and plunged at once into the exciting subject of cable cars in San Francisco. I managed to divert him after a time, being heartily tired of the topic myself, and he confided to me that he suffered from insomnia. He went from bed to bed all night and sometimes lay down on the floor. Poor man, he paid high for his fame – and so did his drawing-room companions.

#### X I V

I REMAINED with the Sharps for a fortnight. They took me to the Tower, Westminster Abbey, and other London 'sights,' smilingly indulgent to my tourist enthusiasm, indefatigable in their kindness. We also went to the theatres and sat in the pit, and lunched in smoky restaurants frequented by writers and journalists.

I left the Sharps to pass two or three days with Mona Caird before going into lodgings. She had a quite lovely house in a garden, the large drawing-room all primrose yellow – walls, furniture, carpet. Her husband was a suppressed little man (No One Caird some wag had named him), but I found him more companionable than my hostess, who was rather too aware of her importance, and inclined to patronize Americans. It was a dull visit, but I had one notable experience in that house and that was with young Caird, aged six. Mrs. Caird was proud of the fact that she had evolved out of her own inner consciousness a new way to bring up children; this solitary offspring of hers had never been cuddled, coddled, punished, crossed, admonished, or coerced by rules of any kind. He was to bring himself

up and be one of her minor offerings to a benighted world.

On the day of my arrival no one could be found to take my trunk to my room, so I opened it in the front hall and carried up some things I should need at once. When I descended the stairs, what did I see but a small boy sitting in the top tray among my hats! He stared at me stolidly when I told him to remove himself and settled back more comfortably, his elbow planted on my best hat.

There was no one else in the hall. I took him by the back of his neck, shook him soundly, and deposited him none too gently on the floor. 'You cannot sit in my trunk, whatever you may do in your mother's,' I said severely. 'Now, understand that once for all.'

I expected that he would lift up his voice and howl, bringing to the scene an indignant mother, who would probably order me out of the house. But he merely stared at me in awe-struck admiration for a moment, then he sprang nimbly to his feet, ran out into the garden, and returned with a handful of flowers which he held up to me with a pathetically eager expression on his dirty freckled face. Poor thing, I suppose it was the first human attention any one had ever shown him. He dogged my footsteps until I left, insisted upon sitting beside me at table, once hid under my bed, and must have denuded the garden of flowers.

## X V

THE Sharps had found lodgings for me not far from their house. I had no plans. I was merely drifting. Perhaps I would live in London; it was too soon to decide, but I had never liked any place half as well. Many of the more or less famous persons I had met were extremely kind and hospitable to me, and I couldn't imagine anything more pleasant than living among them.

But I was half-engaged to some one in New York, and although the pull was not very strong his letters were growing insistent, and after all he was as interesting as any one I had met abroad. I doubt if I have ever been really in love. Again, I must have had some impossible standard, for, after the novelty of a new personality wore off, I always began to find the man full of childish absurdities, or falling short in this and that. To women with the famous maternal instinct these evidences of the eternal boy are all the more endearing, but not to me. I expected perfection and never found it. And, of course, I wanted to be 'understood.' All women want to be understood until they understand themselves.

Moreover, I invariably discovered that an absorbing interest in a new man afforded a mental stimulation which inspired a book; and as soon as the book was ready to be born the man ceased to interest me; having served his purpose he was tactfully or abruptly discarded. More enemies.

It was Heine who said: 'A woman always writes with one eye on some man and the other eye on the paper, except the Countess Hahn-Hahn who has only one eye.' This may be true, but I wrote better when I grew independent of this particular form of stimulation.

It is possible that some small but persistent voice in my subconsciousness warned me never to marry again. As time passed, love of freedom developed into a passion: love of freedom and hatred of routine. I doubt if any artist should marry, if only because there are martyrs enough in the world already!

Some time after I had settled myself in my lodgings as comfortably as might be I dined at the house of Walter Sickert, and had the exciting experience of meeting Whistler. He, Abbey, Sargent, Rossetti, Burne-Jones, Millais, Watts, Leighton and Alma-Tadema were the most eminent artists of their time. But the Englishmen had done their best work, and the three Americans were blazing in the immediate

heavens. Of them, Whistler was by far the most original, with his 'arrangements,' moonlight symphonies, sonatas, nocturnes, the etchings that had ranked him above Rembrandt; too much else to chronicle here. And unique in personality. Years later I met Abbey and Sargent. The latter looked like a prosperous business man. Abbey was short and square, and, despite his brilliant intelligent eyes, might have been anything.

But Whistler! With his white cockade springing upright from his curly black mane, his flashing challenging eyes, his wiry little form never still, his sharp satiric tongue, and his constant buzzing like a mosquito ready to pounce, he could never be taken for anything but a celebrity of the first rank. Never, in any assemblage, was Whistler in the background for a moment! Of course he was an egotist, but as there was never a more interesting one, what matter?

He monopolized the conversation at table, delivering himself freely of his opinions of his fellow artists, and none had incurred his critical favour. Burne-Jones and Rossetti were his principal butts, with their goitre-throated females and indifference to the verities; sentimental Millais was fair game for that sardonic wit, and Leighton, Watts, and Alma-Tadema painted but to be hooted at. Abbey was a mere historian on canvas, and Sargent was a landscape painter who had been seduced into portraiture by titled women. I think his opinions were genuine, for he was too great an artist and too sure of himself to be jealous of any rival. Or perhaps he merely found the temptation to coruscate irresistible and knew that acid comment was the shortest cut.

While the men were lingering over their coffee and port I had a talk with Mrs. Whistler in the drawing-room. Many years younger than her husband she was quite beautiful with her dark liquid eyes and tea-rose complexion, but weighed at least forty pounds more than she should have done. 'My feet are so small and so tender I cannot walk,'



she confided to me. 'But what difference does it make, anyhow?' And she settled herself luxuriously into the deepest chair in the room. The remark was typical of her attitude to life, which she took as it came and refused to be bothered about anything. Living with Whistler, it occurred to me, would either discipline a woman into fortitude or drive her to the divorce court. There was a story that he had proposed to her across the death-bed of her first husband, but like most yarns of that sort it lacked official confirmation. At all events they were a devoted couple, and it was said that her influence had somewhat mellowed his irascible nature.

We took a great fancy to each other, and she asked me if I would be at home on the following Sunday. Meanwhile she would read *Hermia Suydam*. 'I've been intending to read it,' she said apologetically, 'but I'm so lazy! I'll make Jimmie read it too.'

## XVI

WHEN Sunday came Whistler did not wait for the slavey to announce him, but brushing her aside burst into my sitting-room, looking like an infuriated gnat.

'What do you mean by saying in that book of yours that there are no great men in America?' he cried. 'What of ME?'

I raked my mind frantically. I never can remember anything I have written, but I must have made some such sweeping generalization or Whistler would not be pouncing on me like this. I summoned my faculties and answered hastily: 'Oh, I was thinking of statesmen, of course; and besides, you deserted America long since.'

It was a lame retort, but it placated him, and he entertained me for a hour with the bitter tale of his struggles – not once but over and over – for recognition as a supreme

artist. No one ever paid a higher price than he for the crime of originality, no one was ever treated with more unmitigated stupidity by both critics and public. He had 'created a world'; he had revealed the beauty of London to itself and to the world in general; he had been the greatest rebel of his time against the stupid old conventions, and if he had won out at last it was after a fight so long and desperate, so beset with poverty and humiliations, the wonder is he was not more embittered than he was. But his buoyant nature saved him, and at least he had never ceased to be the most conspicuous personality in London. His publicity sense was unrivalled!

A week later William Sharp sailed for the United States, and as Elizabeth intended to make a round of visits in Scotland, they were anxious to let their house for two months. I took it gladly; even novelty lent no charm to London lodgings.

The day after my installation I went over to Chelsea to take tea with the Whistlers. He was painting when I entered the studio, and remained at the easel for half an hour, no doubt that I might always remember I had watched Whistler at work. But Mrs. Whistler and I murmured in a corner, and as I was curious to know her better, I asked her to lunch with me a few days hence – and alone. It was impossible to have a real talk with anyone else with Whistler buzzing about like a hungry mosquito.

Then we had a gay hour at the tea table, and he presented me with a copy of his *Ten O'Clock*. It was a little book bound in brown paper, and in one upper corner he drew his famous butterfly signature, and wrote across the other: 'To my charming compatrioti.' I wish I had it now; but when I returned to San Francisco the Bohemian Club begged it away from me, and it was consumed with so many other treasures in the fire of nineteen-six.

On the appointed day I ordered lunch for two, but as I

stood at the drawing-room window I saw a hansom approaching with Whistler hanging over the apron and looking pleased with himself, as ever. I ran downstairs and gave the maid a hasty order to set another plate, hoping there would be enough to eat. Knowing no more of housekeeping than of yore I left everything to Mrs. Sharp's well-trained servants.

Mrs. Whistler, entering the drawing-room behind her husband, rolled her eyes expressively, and told me later that he had taken his inclusion in my invitation as a matter of course, being quite unable to understand that he could be left out of anything.

Whistler amused himself by ridiculing every picture in the room, the furnishing, even the carpet. He had no opinion of William Sharp, whom he pronounced a big blundering charlatan. Perhaps he revised his opinion later.

It must be confessed that Whistler in any mood was never a bore, whether wanted or not. And he was always willing to carry the burden of conversation on his wiry little shoulders. He was very entertaining at luncheon with his account of the days when he could pay only a few shillings for a model and 'these fellows' – meaning his illustrious contemporaries – thought nothing of spending a guinea an hour. He was always the hero of his anecdotes, but they were the more interesting for that.

He particularly disliked George Meredith, now the rage after thirty years of neglect, and told me of Sunday breakfasts where Burne-Jones, Rossetti, Meredith, and himself among others, used to outdo one another in wit. 'Mine was spontaneous, as you may guess,' he said sincerely, 'and sometimes the others were not bad; at least they said whatever popped into their heads. But this fellow' (Meredith) 'used to sit back, his head sunk in his chest, his eyes closed looking like a stupid Buddha in a second-rate temple, and paying not the slightest attention to the rest of us. Then he would suddenly come to, heave himself like a mountain

about to deliver itself of a mouse, and get off some pompous epigram apropos of nothing.'

I had not been swept away by the Meredith craze, but I felt sorry for him; no doubt he left those breakfasts with Whistlerian darts planted all over him.

A few moments after we returned to the drawing-room Mrs. Whistler said she thought they'd better go, and gave me a meaning glance. I followed her into the adjoining bedroom, where she had left her wraps, and she settled herself comfortably. 'Now,' she said, with a heartfelt sigh, 'we can talk. Of course one never knows about Jimmie, but I don't think he'll follow us in here.'

And then she told me of her experience with her first husband, E. W. Godwin, a well-known but erratic architect. He had been an unsatisfactory partner in all respects, condemning her to a life little short of poverty while he sympathized with discontented but otherwise charming ladies in softly lighted boudoirs. But the failing that seemed to have made the deepest impression on her was a curious affliction that caused him to wake up in the middle of the night shaking with chills that rocked the bed. He insisted upon sleeping under six pairs of blankets, and as they were too poor to afford separate beds, she was compelled to swelter beside him. One winter night he demanded a fire and she had to go out to the yard and chop wood, with a calamitous result that sent her to a hospital for three months. It must have been a blessed respite, whatever she suffered. I didn't like to ask her why she went back to him; she was an artist and could have supported herself; and she volunteered no information on this subject, frank as she was in others. But as he would appear to have possessed a dire fascination for women no doubt she was infatuated with him, although he seemed to me both ridiculous and detestable. At all events she stood him until his death, which fortunately was not too long delayed.

Meanwhile Whistler, incomprehensibly neglected, was expressing his indignation in the drawing-room. He stamped about. He rattled the pictures. He moved the furniture noisily. He knocked peremptorily on the wall. Finally Mrs. Whistler rose with a sigh. 'I'll have to go, or he'll break something. But I got the best of him for once, and I did long to tell you something of myself. It isn't often I get the chance!'

We returned to a storm of reproaches, but he was immediately the uxorious husband when his wife murmured that she had felt ill and been compelled to lie down. He darted a suspicious look at me, however. 'I heard a constant hum of voices,' he remarked drily. I replied hastily that I had endeavoured to divert her mind. I don't think I had uttered six words, for Mrs. Whistler, given the opportunity, was as eloquent an egotist as her husband.

## XVII

I DID not meet George Meredith owing to my own foolishness. As he never came to London, William Sharp had offered to take me down to his country place, where pilgrims to the shrine were made welcome when properly authenticated. But I replied haughtily that I had never gone out of my way to meet a man in my life and would not pay George Meredith or anyone else that compliment. California women were badly spoiled by men – who must do all the running. When I was older and had acquired more sense I regretted this lost opportunity, and was violently flattered when I read Meredith's published letters; although I never quite understood what he meant by my 'suave flowing style.' It was one I avoided cultivating; too many had it. Possibly, any style seemed suave and easy beside his own.

I did not meet Bret Harte either, much to my regret. The

Sharps invited him to the reception. but he was leaving for the Continent, and obliged to decline. He wrote me a charming note, however, expressing his own regret, and referring to members of my family, whom he had known in the old days. I kept that note for a long time, but of course it disappeared finally. So did many other letters and souvenirs, for in my roving life it seemed to be impossible to keep anything. The only visible reminders I have of those days are autographed photographs of Sibyl Sanderson and Massenet, and a copy of *Esclarmonde*, with a graceful inscription by the composer.

But if I never met Bret Harte I saw him some years later at a Fourth of July reception at the American Embassy in London. A dapper dandified little man, who walked with short mincing steps, as if his patent leather shoes were too small for him; but a most distinguished figure, nevertheless. I intended to go up and speak to him, but my attention was diverted and when I remembered him he had disappeared.

George Moore I never saw again. He too could not – or would not – come to the reception, but the next day I received a note asking me to take tea with him at his chambers. I thought it wise to decline! He took offence; doubtless cursed me as a hopeless Grundy-ridden Californian, and unworthy of pursuit.

I did meet one of the London curios, however: Lady Wilde. Once locally famous as ‘Speranza,’ now known merely as the mother of Oscar Wilde – if known at all. Few, I fancy, ever thought of her, knew whether she were dead or alive. Many, I inferred, who had had their little day, lived in those backwaters of London, crumbling wrecks forgotten by Time, forgotten too long by Death.

Miss Henriette Corkran (of whom more hereafter) took me to call on Lady Wilde. In her arms she carried a large plum cake. ‘Lady Wilde is frightfully poor,’ she said. ‘Her sons do little or nothing for her. Her friends don’t dare offer

her money or real food, for she's very proud, so we always take her a cake, which we beg her to "try, as we have made it oursevl'es." I only hope the gas isn't turned off, and you will be able to see her.'

Lady Wilde lived in a tiny house in an obscure street. The gas was presumably turned off, for the hall was pitch dark, and the drawing-room – some eight feet square – into which the miserable slavey conducted us, was lit by three tallow candles. But the strange figure that rose as we entered received us with the grand air. She might have been a queen graciously giving a private audience. In her day she must have been a beautiful and stately woman; she was still stately, heaven knew, but her old face was gaunt and grey, and seamed with a million criss-crossed lines, etched by care, sorrow, and (no doubt) hunger. Her dress was a relic of the 'sixties, grey satin trimmed with ragged black fringe over a large hoop-skirt. As her hair was black it was presumably a wig, and it was dressed very high, held in place by a Spanish comb from which depended a black lace mantilla. She pressed her withered lips to Henriette's red cheek, and extended to me a claw-like hand. I wondered if I were expected to kiss it, but gave myself the benefit of the doubt.

She received the cake graciously, but put it aside without a glance. Poor thing, no doubt she devoured it whole as soon as we left; but her manner was lofty and detached, almost complacent. She always remains in my mind as a leaning tower of courage.

But it was an uncomfortable hour. The room was close and stuffy, the furniture as antiquated as herself; the springs could not have been mended for forty years. She talked to Henriette in a weak quavering voice, mainly of the triumphs of her exalted son, although she drifted back to the past when she had been one of the lights of Dublin with her literary and political *salon*, the words of wisdom that flowed from her facile brain to an admiring world over her romantic

*nom de guerre*. But to her present circumstances she made no allusion, and the walls seemed to expand until the dingy parlour became a great *salon* crowded with courtiers, and the rotting fabric of her rag-bag covering turned by a fairy's wand into cloth of gold shimmering in the light of a thousand wax candles. But the dream faded. Once more she was a laboriously built-up terribly old woman who subsisted mainly on indigestible cake contributed by the few friends who remembered her existence.

She turned to me finally: 'Would you like to meet Oscar?' she asked with an indulgent smile. 'Or perhaps you met him in America?'

'No, I never met him, although he came to California,' I said deprecatingly. 'I – I – was ill at the time.' It would hardly do to tell her that my husband would not even permit me to attend his lecture, convinced as he was that a man who walked about with a sunflower in his hand and called himself an æsthete must be too improper for a decent woman to look at. 'But I'd like to,' I added hastily. 'It is very kind of you.'

'I see little of him,' she said sadly. 'He is so very busy. He is always working, and the world will not let him alone. No one in London is so sought after as Oscar. But he has promised to come to see me next Saturday, and I should be delighted if you would come too. I will write him about you, and I am sure he will bring you a lily.'

Of course I responded with fervour, but I sent an appealing glance to Henriette and we left shortly after. It had seemed to me that if I remained in that airless room with that grotesquely tragic figure another moment I should scream.

I intended to go on the following Saturday, for who would not have welcomed in those days the opportunity to meet Oscar Wilde? But a day or two later I saw a photograph of him. His mouth covered half of his face, the most lascivious, coarse, repulsive mouth I had ever seen. I might



stand it in a large crowded drawing-room, but not in a parlour, eight by eight, lit by three tallow candles. I should feel as if I were under the sea pursued by some bloated monster of the deep, and have nightmares for a week thereafter. I sent a telegram to Lady Wilde regretting that I was in bed with a cold.

## XVIII

LONDON was a dreary waste, hot, airless, deserted. Every one I knew had gone to the Continent or to work in some secluded retreat. I knew no one then who had a country place, and Elizabeth Sharp would want her house before long; I must either go back into lodgings or return to America. I made up my mind suddenly and left on the next boat for New York.

There I took another apartment and furnished it, but I did not remain for long. My grandfather died after a brief illness. It was a fearful blow, and I went out and walked the streets all day. Mingled with the sense of disaster was the regret that he had not lived long enough to see his hopes in me fulfilled. I was but at the beginning of my career, and so far had little to be proud of. I was a notoriety, not a celebrity, regarded as an outlaw for whom there was no place in American letters. (Such complimentary reviews as William Sharp and one or two others had written in the London literary publications had been ignored by the Press of my own country.) How much of this he had guessed I could not tell; his letters had always been encouraging, although he had taken good care to remind me that I was still but a tyro and had a long row to hoe.

I left New York abruptly for several reasons. The man to whom I have referred wanted to me to marry him at once and I had no intention of marrying him at all. I found upon

my return that he didn't interest me in the least, but as he had what is known as a 'dominant personality,' and regarded me as a child who did not know her own mind, it was no easy matter to get rid of him. With the continent between us it would be possible to wind up the affair once for all.

*Los Cerritos* was brought out by another new publisher – whose life was as brief as that of Belford Clarke & Company – but how it was received by the critics I have forgotten. Probably, as by no stretch of imagination could it be called immoral, they ignored it. But I was worried because my own imagination seemed to have gone to sleep. No other book was prowling about my mind waiting to be born, nor popped in from nowhere. For years I had these sterile periods, and, in fact, have rarely finished a book to this day without the conviction that it was my last; the rotten spot seemed shrivelled and dead, my mind suddenly as literal as if imagination had never possessed it . . . but there was always another book round the corner.

One day I picked up a new publication, a weekly magazine edited by Kate Field. It was making something of a sensation, and I read it with interest, little dreaming it was to start me forth on a new quest.

My interest was beginning to wane when I lit upon a paragraph that ran something as follows: 'Why do California writers neglect the old Spanish life of that State? Never has there been anything so picturesque and romantic in the history of America, and it is a mine of wealth waiting for some bright genius to pan out.'

I read no more. Forked lightning was crackling in my skull. It illumined a dazzling vista. Bret Harte had barely touched upon that period and its nuggets were mine. As for other 'California writers,' their reputations were bounded on the east by the Bay of San Francisco and on the west by the Pacific Ocean.

There was some excuse for my past indifference. I had never visited the old Spanish towns of California, nor even read a history of the State; and when the subject came up, which was rarely, Mrs. Atherton had always sniffed. What were Spanish Californians in comparison with the aristocratic exiles of Chile? I had received the impression they were mere dirt.

Now vague references, rumours, scattered pictures by Bret Harte, floated down my memory to fire enthusiasm. A week later I was on my way to California.

Another reason for my return was that Mrs. Atherton was ill. I wrote to her often, although she never answered my letters; proud as she was of her English she somehow refrained from putting it to the test of ink and paper. Florence and Elena would seem to have been inhibited by nature against the written word, and it was Alex who wrote me from Paris that she was worried about her mother.

Then too I wanted to see how my family was getting on. I knew that the bank had made my mother a handsome present after her father's death, and that she was living with Daisy, now married, at Ross, a settlement of country houses on the northern side of the bay; not unlike Menlo Park, but of no such distinguished vintage.

I found them very comfortably installed. John Craig, the new member of the family, was doing well, and seemed delighted to have his mother-in-law and Aleece with him. Hannah was helping Rose with the work.

My mother was sewing industriously, as ever; this time for the impending baby. Daisy, in her new role of young matron and prospective mother, was complacent and superior. Aleece was a beauty; her large blue eyes, with their short strong black lashes, were both soft and humorous; her chestnut hair grew in points about a low forehead; her complexion was like a rose-tinted magnolia; her delicately rounded figure erect and stately. Although she was five feet

six, she wore a five-and-three-quarter glove and her feet were so narrow that she had to have her shoes made to order. Her features were irregular and her black eyebrows too broad, but she was a beauty nevertheless and of course had a bevy of admirers. She had always been devoted to me and met me at the train, but her first words were: 'Great heaven! That's the coat you had when you left California! I expected you to come back with a lot of new clothes. I'm glad you didn't tell anyone else what train you were coming on, and you'll buy a new coat to-morrow.'

Clothes have always interested me off and on, and at this time I had spent too much money travelling and furnishing flats to bother about what I wore. I had had my former evening gowns remodelled before I went to Paris, and it was over a year since I had bought anything new. But I promised hastily that I would reform at once.

'You'd better,' she said severely. 'You should have come back in grand style. If you appear in that thing they'll think you're a failure. You never did care enough for dress anyway, and a good front is half the battle.' True enough. Every woman should dress well whether she can afford it or not. Aleece was one of those fortunate persons not only born with worldly wisdom, but able to dress smartly on nothing. She had the instinct for 'picking up,' and she had both style and the grand air. The Uhlhorns would have been proud of her, but it is doubtful if they knew of her existence.

On the following day, having bought a new coat under Aleece's supervision, I went down to Menlo Park to see Mrs. Atherton. She was shockingly altered. Her two hundred pounds were reduced to ninety, and she was shivering in the warm sunshine on the veranda, within the folds of a padded dressing-gown. What disease was consuming her I never knew, for I saw at once that the family did not care to discuss the subject and asked no questions.

Florence, now married to Edward Eyre, Faxon and Jennie

were staying with her, and Elena had lived on the adjoining estate since her marriage with Percy Selby. They all appeared glad to see me, and asked me many questions about Alex and Nina, but made no reference to my books, copies of which I had dutifully sent to Mrs. Atherton.

Her body might be disintegrating, but her mind was as lively and satiric as ever; if she realized her condition, she gave no sign. When I told her that I was about to make a tour of the Spanish towns, she sniffed as of yore. 'Why you write of those peoples?' she demanded. 'Only Mexicans before. No come from old Spain. Only one of them have any importance, Mrs. Dibblee. She is a de la Guerra before and feel very proud, but much better she be proud to be Mrs. Dibblee, the great lady of Santa Barbara; her husband very reech. She very fascinating woman and si you go to Santa Barbara call on her and tell her I send you and give her my love.'

## X I X

MURIEL was at boarding-school, in the Sacred Heart Convent in San Francisco, but had been at Ross to meet me and remained for a fortnight. At the end of that time I set forth with Aleece to delve to the Spanish past.

We went first to Monterey, then a far more picturesque town than now, for fashion had not discovered it, and many of the old adobe houses, built in the early days of the century before the American conquest, were standing. What was even more important to me, they were occupied by women who had memories of the old regime.

Pursuing a plan I had formed, I roamed about until I saw a house that looked moderately comfortable, a two-story adobe with a balcony, walked in, and asked the large dark bearded relic to take us as boarders. She was astounded and

refused volubly, but her middle-aged daughter, who must have lived a dull monotonous life, finally persuaded her to accept us on condition that we take our meals out and do our own room. The old lady had married an American, but she belonged to one of the best-known of the Spanish (or Mexican) families, and as I soon persuaded her to talk, she gave me much information of the manners and customs and personalities of the days when California was a Department of Mexico. Her daughter took me to call on other old women, one of whom was eighty but danced *El Son* for me as lightly as she may have done when she was eighteen, one of the belles of Monterey, and Alvarado, Pio Pico, and General Castro flung gold and silver at her feet.

A spare little old spinster who lived alone within a high-walled garden had a proud claim to immortality. Sherman, when a young lieutenant, had loved her, and together they had planted a rose tree in her garden. He had loved and ridden away, but she had remained faithful to his memory and never married. A portrait, painted in her girlhood, hung in the *sala* among pictures of saints and madonnas, and I wondered that the famous American could have forgotten any one so lovely. She was now brown and withered, but still pretty, and seemed contented enough, devoting herself to her garden, her famous rose tree and the poor.

She told me that she had been so victimized by tourists, who snipped the branches from her rose tree, and even wrenched the keys off the piano, that she had put a lock on the gate and admitted no one but her friends. Others related similar experiences. I believe tourists behave better now, but they were a scandal in those days.

Before starting on my travels I had read Hittell's *History of California*, and a chance paragraph had suggested a story. In writing of the pearl fisheries of Baja (lower) California he related the incident of a large haul made by Indians, who, out of gratitude for some fancied blessing, had hung the

pearls on the statue of the Madonna in the Mission church of Loreto. That was the beginning and the end of the 'historical facts,' or 'legend' upon which the story was built. I conceived the idea of a haughty Monterey belle, weary of idle caballeros singing at her grating, and doing little else, announcing that she would marry no man who did not bring her a lapful of pearls. Now, pearls were rare in Alta California, and even the most energetic of her suitors (Don Vicente de la Vega, as I named him later) was in despair until he heard of the wealth that had recently been hung on the Lady of Loreto. Saying nothing of his purpose, he rode away on a long and adventurous journey, sacrilegiously robbed the shrine, returned to pour the loot into the lap of Ysabel Herrera, and receive his reward from the astonished and gratified beauty. But vengeance was at his heels. That night at a ball in the Custom House, when Ysabel, hung from crown to ankle with the pearls, was dancing in his arms, a ragged dirty priest, who had tracked him from Loreto, burst into the ball-room and denounced him in the name of the Church. The penalty for robbing a shrine was death, and de la Vega seized Ysabel in his arms again, dashed from the room, leaped over the rocks, and disappeared into the deep waters of the bay, pursued by the horrified cries of that distinguished and pious company. I called the story *Pearls of Loreto*, and it was published eventually in a volume of these Old California tales entitled *The Splendid Idle 'Forties*. Years later Belasco told me he had made a libretto of it, and was about to ask my consent to send it to Mascagni, when *The Pearls of the Madonna* was performed in New York — an opera that sang the story of a man who robbed a jewelled shrine to win the favour of a capricious beauty. Singular coincidence.

A California historian also lifted pages bodily from the story, not even taking the trouble to rewrite them, giving the tragedy of Ysabel Herrera and Vicente de la Vega as an

authentic incident of California's early history, and, assumedly, his own discovery. Queer people in this world.

## XX

WE remained for several weeks in Monterey, and meanwhile I thought of another story. One of the chapters involved a scene on what is now the famous Seventeen-Mile Drive. I asked my younger hostess to invite six or eight of her women friends of Spanish ancestry – there were no men! – to take a drive with me on the next moonlight night, and to wear mantillas and bring their guitars. Imagination was all very well, but I had a passion for facts. That night's experience almost cured me.

Of course they were all delighted, and, on the night designated poured, chattering volubly, into the *sala*.

I should have liked to throw them out bodily: six dumpy little women long past their youth, their heads tied up in black worsted fascinators. When I asked them why they had not worn their ancestral mantillas they replied they were afraid of catching cold. My friend had a like excuse.

But I had engaged the *char-a-banc*; it would have been brutal to disappoint them, and, always optimistic, I hoped they would be etherialized by the moonlight.

There is no more magnificent drive in the world than that stretch of coast: wild, rocky, facing an illimitable expanse, where great waves roll in and fall down with the peculiar ponderosity of the Pacific Ocean, tossing spray, outlying rocks; cedars of Lebanon twisted into shapes, human, diabolical, springing from every crevice. Behind were the pine woods, black to-night under a blazing moon that turned the sea to silver and made the huge piles of rocks almost startlingly white.

The scene I had in mind was a moonlight picnic of cabal-



leros and doñas, young, slender, clad in the colourful and picturesque costumes of Old California. The beautiful señoritas would sit gracefully on the rocks, and the caballeros, worshipping at their feet, would play the guitar and sing the love songs of old Spain.

We arrived at the spot I had in mind. I disposed the women, volubly delighted at playing a part, on various points of vantage. One fell into a pool of bilge water and had to be segregated, and the rest complained that their pinnacles were very sharp but vowed they would see it out. Then I walked back to the edge of the woods and surveyed the scene. Those women looked like nothing on earth but so many black turkey buzzards squatting on the rocks, gorged with prey, immovable for the night. Aleece's giggles mingled with the twang-twang of dilapidated guitars.

Sharp are the thorns that strew the way of a writer striving to give a touch of realism to romance! Furious as I was, my discomfiture did not end there, for when I came to write that scene my caballeros and doñas would fade out as those fat little women in worsted fascinators persistently thrust themselves into the foreground. I believe two of them were chewing gum. Being no philanthropist, I was by no means consoled by the thought that I had given seven stranded women a happy and exciting hour.

We went from Monterey to San Juan Bautista, intending to remain for several days, as it had been one of General Castro's headquarters, and was redolent of early California history; but an earthquake nearly shook us out of bed the first night, and Aleece flatly refused to stay an hour longer than the next train would take us forth. We had until three o'clock in the afternoon, however; ample time to climb the mountain overhanging the village, where Frémont had taken his stand against Castro's army; and an old man, whom we met in the hotel, took us to his house and showed us relics of the famous Donner party, of which he claimed to be the

last surviving member. But as he was very drunk, and had been only three years old at the time of that gruesome episode, it is doubtful if I added materially to my fund of historical information.

## X X I

THREE women of Old California in whom I was passionately interested were Doña Modeste Castro, the wife of General Castro, a green-eyed beauty whose jewels and gowns came from Mexico City, and who was the leader of society in Monterey, then the Capital of Alta California; Señora Jiménez (the Doña Eustaquia of *The Ears of Twenty Americans*, a story that embraced the moonlight picnic); and another whose legal name I have forgotten, but whom I called Doña Jacoba Duncan, in *The Conquest of Doña Jacoba* – the story I had in mind when I went to San Luis Obispo for the setting.

It was a charming setting, that little town in a cup of the hills – hills, when I saw them, that were coloured red, brown, pink, golden, violet, and one black from fire. A part of the story was to be laid on a ranch farther out in the valley, but at the moment I was less interested in the unborn chronicle than in the hope of meeting Doña Modeste Castro, still alive, although she must have been past eighty. I knew that she was living with her son in ‘San Luis,’ and the prospect of actually seeing and speaking to a woman who had been a great figure in that romantic era of California’s history, to say nothing of being the widow of the gallant General Castro – alas, that he should have been devoured by wild hogs in Baja California! – excited me greatly. To meet her son, also, would be another direct contact. It was almost unbelievable!

I was somewhat dashed when the hotel clerk informed me that the only Castro he knew of kept a saloon. Two in fact!

Who his father had been the indifferent clerk 'couldn't say,' but this man was a prosperous citizen and quite respectable.

Where he lived not even the surprised and somewhat disapproving proprietor of the hotel could tell me. There was nothing to do but call on the only Castro at one of his saloons, and we started off on our new voyage of discovery – Aleece giggling as usual; she had giggled almost steadily since the day of our arrival in Monterey.

It was a large and handsome saloon. I drew a long breath and entered alone, Aleece drawing the line at saloons.

A big oleaginous jovial-looking man stood behind the bar. He stared at me wonderingly, and so did the five or six men who were refreshing themselves. But they all looked harmless enough.

'Are you General Castro's son?' I asked precipitately, and in a dead silence.

He beamed. 'That I am, lady. What can I do for you?'

He looked as if about to offer me a drink, and I went on hastily to tell him who I was, and my purpose in visiting San Luis Obispo. 'I am most anxious to meet your mother,' I finished. 'She will be in one or more of my stories . . . and if I could only see her . . . She is the most charming figure in early California history.'

'Sure!' he boomed. 'Sure. To-morrow is Sunday. You come to dinner. I'll fetch you and take you out to my house. My mother'll be tickled to death. She's pretty old but her memory's all right. I'll send for my brother Estéban, too.' He leaned over the bar and whispered confidentially, 'He lives with a digger woman up in the hills, and we're rather ashamed of him, but I guess you'd like to meet the whole family.'

'Oh, yes,' I said faintly. 'Will you come out and meet my sister?'

He left the bar – and escorted us back to the hotel! 'First time I ever walked the street with a barkeep,' commented

Aleece, when, with quite the air of a grandee, he had bade us *hasta luego*. 'What next!'

He was dressed in his black Sunday best when he called for us on the following day at a quarter to twelve. Notwithstanding his portliness he carried himself well, and he had inherited a certain distinction that had survived his years of handing out drinks and his beloved Americanisms. Aleece walked haughtily beside him, darting glances right and left, thankful she knew no one in San Luis Obispo. But I found it a thrilling experience to be in actual contact with so immediate a descendant of one of my heroes.

He lived in a pleasant white house on the outskirts of the town. A quite modern house. He would have disdained to occupy one of the few adobes the march of progress had spared. His wife, as portly as himself, received us hospitably, and we went at once in to dinner. I think there must have been ten children about that table, literally groaning with food. Brother Estéban had accepted the invitation, a dried-up little wisp of a man too interested in the sumptuous repast to open his mouth otherwise.

And Doña Modeste! Gone was the slender grace of her youth. Gone every vestige of beauty and elegance. She was so fat that she had a bust in the back as well as in front, and her *ojos verdes* looked like bleached gooseberries. Alas for realism.

I wished I had remained content with my imaginative picture of her, particularly as she didn't speak a word of English. It was evident that I would learn nothing from her, but when she rose to lead the way out to the porch I saw that despite her unwieldy bulk she still had something of an air.

I had told Mr. Castro – no Don nor Señor here! – that I wanted to spend a fortnight in the house of some one who had memories of the old time, and he took me next day to call on a Mrs. Childs. She was a woman still in the forties,

who had been hardly out of swaddling clothes at the time of the American Occupation in 1846. But she assured me eagerly that she knew all about the old life from her mother and many aunts, and took us not only to lodge but to board. She told me all I wanted to know about 'Doña Jacoba,' and so much that was interesting about her own youth – when California was still Spanish enough despite the rapid influx of Americans – that I made her the heroine of *A Ramble with Eulogia*. She had been a great coquette in her day, although it was difficult to imagine it now, and she could never have been pretty; but she was still vivacious and fascinating, and was delighted to indulge in those reminiscences of her youth. I doubt if she ever found any one else to listen to her. Her daughter was a typical small-town American girl, who, like so many of her generation, rather disdained her Spanish ancestry. But she was interested in us, who came from the 'great world,' and proved an invaluable guide in my exploratory drives about the country.

## XXII

FROM San Luis Obispo we went to Santa Inez, an isolated Mission surrounded by silver olive groves, no doubt planted by the old padres. The priest gave us a luncheon of macaroni, and detained us as long as possible, for he was a lonely soul. He showed us some illuminated manuscripts made in the old days by his predecessors when not engaged in the hopeless task of spiritualizing the lowest race of Indians on the continent.

Then we took the stage for Santa Barbara. We could have gone far more comfortably by train from San Luis, but I wanted to describe from personal observation De la Vega's ride over the mountains on his ill-fated quest. And this time I was well rewarded, for the scenery was magnifi-

cent and awe-inspiring; it looked indeed as if it but yesterday had boiled up out of chaos. There were peaks rising abruptly from the gorges that were nothing but masses of huge and polished stones indubitably ejected when California was in her throes. The longer sweeps of the mountain range were dark with primordial forest. True, the way lay along the edge of precipices, and Alcece shrieked every time the horses slipped over the edge or we met a team on the narrow road; but then there is always something.

We arrived in Santa Barbara so coated with dust, looking so dehumanized, so altogether disreputable, that the haughty clerk of the Arlington Hotel was about to turn us away, inferring we must be nobodies to have travelled by stage instead of a luxurious train; when I suddenly remembered that my father-in-law had once been a landholder in the county and shamelessly invoked his name. We were shown at once to a comfortable suite.

The De la Guerras were my objective in Santa Barbara, for of all the families of Old California theirs had been the most notable, not excepting the Castros, Alvarados, and Argüellos. Don José de la Guerra, a descendant of Spanish grandees (Mrs. Atherton notwithstanding), had migrated from Mexico in the latter part of the eighteenth century with a grant of three hundred thousand Departmental acres in his pocket. Thousands of cattle roamed his ranches and he did an extensive trade in hides with the Boston skippers. He was the leading figure in such politics as there were, and his house in Santa Barbara – Casa Grande – was the scene of constant and magnificent hospitality. It was in this famous old mansion that Alfred Robinson had married a daughter of the house, a ceremony immortalized by Richard Henry Dana in *Two Years Before the Mast*. The splendour had continued for a time under his son Don Pablo, but the American adventurers with their sharp practices had gradually denuded him of his acres, and to-day there was little left

to his widow and her three children, Carlos, Delfina, and Herminia, but the historic old mansion. The eldest daughter, Mrs. Dibblee, had married a wealthy Bostonian, and lived in a large stone house on a bluff overhanging the Channel, for long the finest private residence in Southern California.

This time I had taken the precaution to bring a letter of introduction, for although I was determined to be taken into Casa Grande, the De la Guerras were not a family one could walk in upon and from whom to demand a lodging.

### X X I I I

SANTA BARBARA was not the modern and almost oppressively wealthy city it is to-day, and the Mexican driver of the lone street car would obligingly halt and let one run into a drug store for an ice cream soda while he lolled on his stool and smoked the eternal cigarette; but it was sufficiently puzzling with its houses almost hidden behind their luxuriant shrubbery and often surrounded by hedges as impenetrable as walls. When, bathed, shampooed, fed, we set forth to find Casa Grande, we were obliged to ask our way several times before we reached the old Spanish Plaza on which it was situated, not far from the blue waters of the Channel, but almost obscured by the American mushrooms overlapping it.

Casa Grande lay about three sides of a courtyard, a graceful structure of one story, painted white under a roof of red tiles. I approached the wide front door facing the square with some trepidation. The friend in Monterey who had given me the note of introduction had told me the De la Guerras were very proud – and the Spanish can be prouder than any race on earth – and no doubt would be horrified at the bare suggestion of taking lodgers into that sacrosanct mansion. I should have to use the utmost tact.

A Mexican servant responded to our knock, and showed

us into a long dark *sala*, whitewashed and hung with family portraits and religious pictures — like every *sala* we had entered so far. But the furniture was in good repair, although no doubt as old as the house, and the room had an air of comfort as well as distinction.

I had handed the maid my note of introduction, and in a few moments Señora de la Guerra and her daughters Delfina and Herminia entered and gave us a hospitable if ceremonious welcome. The señora spoke no English. Herminia, recently widowed, looked sad and *distracte*. I felt that my best hope lay with Delfina. She was a quite lovely young woman with dark hair and Spanish green eyes that twinkled understandingly. I guessed she knew quite well what I was after, for she must have been prepared for our visit by her friends in Monterey. I determined to place my cards on the table at once, and told her frankly that I had the vague outlines of a novel in mind, whose scene was Santa Barbara, and more particularly Casa Grande. It was a great deal to ask, I knew, but if there *was* a spare bedroom, and if she *would* let us have it, we'd promise to give no trouble at all.

It was evident they had talked the matter over, for, after a rapid conversation in Spanish with her mother, Delfina led us to a room at the extreme end of one of the wings. It was a large airy room, cleaner and better furnished than any that had been our lot hitherto, but that was a mere nothing beside the information that it had once been occupied by Concepcion (Concha) Argüello, heroine of the one famous love story of Old California; when, after Rezanov had sailed away never to return, she had assumed the habit of the third order of Franciscans and devoted her life to good works. It was years before I wrote *Rezanov*, but it was always in the back of my mind.

The result of those weeks in Santa Barbara was *The Doomswoman*, a short novel inspired by that atmosphere of the past and something of Delfina's personality.



Delfina and Herminia danced the old Spanish dances for me, showed me the costumes, shawls, mantillas, worn by their more fortunate ancestors; and Mrs. Dibblee, a regal woman who retained all the slender grace of her girlhood despite a large family, told me many incidents in the history of the De la Guerras. She also entertained us at her house on the cliff and took us for long drives; even Aleece enjoyed that visit to Santa Barbara. 'Rather different from those greasy old relics you tried to get inspiration out of,' she commented drily. 'You'd never take the De la Guerras for anything but what they are, and it's a relief to walk about in a civilized town once more, not a collection of mud hovels.'

The Mission—the only one at that time in a state of complete repair—dominated the town from rising ground in the east, and with its brown-robed Franciscans must have looked much as it did in the old days when the padres were all-powerful in California. The priests were very genial; they entertained us at luncheon, and took us up into one of the belfries where we had a magnificent view of the riotous colour in the valley, the ripe fruit in the orchards, the deep sapphire blue of the Channel. Above, the unflecked sky was as blue as the water, and behind the Mission the rocky frowning mountains rose in almost perpendicular lines, strangely barren and bleak in contrast with the luxuriance at their feet.

Delfina conceived the idea of having an old time *merienda* (picnic) in a rocky gorge, as one of her many contributions to 'atmosphere,' but as I sat down on a snake other memories of that festivity are somewhat hazy.

From Santa Barbara we went to Los Angeles, a town of some fifty thousand inhabitants, shabby and sleepy. In the old plaza Mexicans loafed from morn till eve, drifting at intervals into the saloon. Can any tourist visiting the Chicago of the Coast reconstruct that scene?

Then we returned to Ross, and as there was a spare bedroom I boarded with the Craigs and settled down to write my stories.

## XXIV

MRS. ATHERTON was brought to town and I saw her several times before she died. Her death left a blank space in the lives of all who knew her, for she was a real personality, and very kind, despite her many and curious idiosyncrasies.

Craig gave up the house in Ross and took a large apartment in town that accommodated all of us.

I had been having some correspondence with Ambrose Bierce, then the blinding light of the San Francisco *Examiner*. As far as I know he was the first of the columnists, and certainly there has never been one more brilliant. And the most fearless. Why he was never shot was one of the problems, for he spared no one, however eminent, who had a crack in his armour. His pen was dipped in vitriol and he was a master of bitter irony and wit. And invective! Here is one of his tributes to a smug, prosperous, and influential citizen with a dubious past:

You, whose gutter blood  
Bears in its dark dishonourable flood  
Enough of prison birds' prolific germs  
To serve a whole eternity of terms . . .

And so on, for a column and more. Threats. Street fights. Brandishing pistols. Appeals in vain to William Randolph Hearst, who treasured Bierce above all men.

Years before he had made a reputation in London and should have remained there. He was wasted in San Francisco, extravagantly as he was admired, hated, feared. But the field was too small for his genius.

It was his stories, *Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, that had

excited my own admiration, however, and I think it was through them that the correspondence came about.

As he had asthma and could not stand the fogs and winds of San Francisco, he went from hotel to hotel in the country, wearing out one climate after another. At present he was living at Suñol, a hamlet in the interior. Wherever Bierce happened to be staying was a shrine to which pilgrims wended their way to offer up incense and sit at the feet of the Master. He invited me to come up and spend a day with him; it was winter and he dared not venture into San Francisco. After some hesitation I concluded to go – although I had refused to be taken to see George Meredith! I was consumed with curiosity, and, after all, he had been polite enough to say that he would have called upon me had it been possible.

I remember nothing of Suñol but the hotel, the station – and a pigsty.

Bierce was about forty-nine at the time, a tall man, very thin and closely knit, with curly iron-grey hair, a bristling moustache, beetling brows over frowning eyes, good features and beautiful hands. His appearance did not appeal to me, however, for he looked too much like my father – what my mother would have called a typical Yank. We eyed each other rather oppugnantly when he met me at the train. I was by way of giving him to understand that although I admired his work, and had gone out of my way to meet him, I had no intention of falling down and worshipping him. What was in his own mind I never knew. I had on a very becoming blue frock, and presumably he thought I was vain and spoilt and a member of the idle rich who wrote merely to amuse herself.

The luncheon passed off well enough in that dreary fly-specked dining-room; S. S. Chamberlain, the editor of the *Examiner*, was present and he was an easy and brilliant talker. But he disappeared when the meal was over – and

Bierce led me into his bedroom! He looked cynical and somewhat amused.

I did not turn a hair, however, and settled myself in the one comfortable chair, while he, with a muttered apology lay down on the bed! Invalids have their privileges.

It was the most disagreeable afternoon I ever spent. We quarrelled incessantly. On every conceivable subject. He tore my books to rags. I had promise, but I had written nothing as yet worthy of serious consideration. This might be true, but I wasn't going to admit it to him, and I retaliated by criticizing his own work. His stories might be models of craftsmanship and style, and he had mastered the technique of horror, but they were so devoid of humanity that they fell short of true art, and would never make any but a limited appeal. He congratulated me upon the mature judgment which no doubt had made me in high demand as a critic.

We got round to authors in general. Meredith had been ignored for thirty years and should never have been 'discovered' at all. Obscurity was the place for him. He could neither think straight nor write straight. His style was atrocious, and his characters as inchoate as his sentences. I was not enamoured of Meredith, but I defended him acidly. Never would I agree with that detestable man on any subject.

As for Stevenson, he was nothing but a phrase-maker; his imagination was so thin that it was all he could do to beat it out into a novel of conventional length. It was like an attenuated wire threatening to snap at any moment. No wonder he cultivated a style so artificial that it diverted what little discernment the average reader might possess from the pitiful lack of content. Novels were not worth writing anyway. The only form in which the perfection of art could be achieved, as well as the effect of totality, was that of the short story.

'The trouble with you,' I said crudely, 'is that you cannot write novels yourself. All short-story writers are jealous of novelists. They all try to write novels and few of them succeed. Any clever cultivated mind, with a modicum of talent, can manage the short story, even with no authentic gift for fiction – as you yourself have proved. But it takes a very special endowment and an abundant imagination to sustain the creative faculty throughout a story of novel length. *To hold it up*. Only the born novelist carries on without falling down over and over, stumbling along from one high spot to another.'

And so it went. We almost spat at each other. And there would be no train until six o'clock.

Finally I thought I would change my tactics. After all the poor man was ill, and embittered through many misfortunes. He had lost his great opportunity when family obligations forced him to leave London. He was condemned to second-rate hotels in order to support an estranged wife and two children on his salary. And his eldest and favourite son – a boy of great promise – had recently been shot to death in a disgraceful fracas.

So I relented, told him I was sorry I had been so quarrelsome, for no one admired him more than I did. He was a great man and I was willing to admit it.

I might have saved myself the concession. He almost flew at me. He was not great. He wouldn't be called great. He was a failure, a mere hack. He got so red I feared he would have an attack of asthma. He gave me some twenty reasons why he wasn't great, but I have forgotten all of them. I still think him one of the greatest short-story writers that ever lived.

The shadows were lengthening. The short winter day was drawing to a close. I rose with a sigh of relief.

'A quarter to six,' I said briskly. 'And I'd like a breath of fresh air before two hours in that over-heated train.'

As we walked to the station his manner changed. He became almost charming. He thanked me for coming to see him and apologized for being so cantankerous, said that he had found an irresistible pleasure in arguing with me, and that I was a blue and gold edition of all the poets!!!

The train was late. We walked about the station, conversing most amiably. It grew darker. We were in the shadows between the station and malodorous grunting pigsty when he suddenly seized me in his arms and tried to kiss me. In a flash I knew how to hurt him. Not by struggling and calling him names. I threw back my head -- well out of his reach -- and laughed gaily. 'The great Bierce!' I cried. 'Master of style! The god on Olympus at whose feet pilgrims come to worship -- trying to kiss a woman by a pigsty!'

The train steamed in at the moment. He rushed me to it and almost flung me on board. 'I never want to see you again!' he barked. 'You are the most detestable little vixen I ever met in my life, and I've had a horrible day.'

I smiled down at him from the platform. I knew my barb had gone in to the hilt, for women had spoilt him and no doubt he thought himself irresistible.

'I have only been mildly bored,' I said sweetly. 'And I certainly have too many pleasant places to visit to think of coming up here again to spend hours with a man in a chronic state of ill-temper -- and who is so unæsthetic. . . .' The train roared out of the station.

The correspondence was renewed after a time and became almost affectionate. He took a great interest in my work and gave me much valuable advice, for which I have always been grateful. But whenever we met we both bristled with antagonism, and I never spent a pleasant hour in his company.

I must have had a hundred of those letters, all expressed in a prose that made every sentence a treasure. And models of calligraphy; save my grandfather's I have never seen

a more beautiful handwriting. But, alas, they perished in the fire of nineteen-six. Someone stole the copy of *Soldiers and Civilians* he gave me, and the only memento I have of him is a photograph – autographed on the back!

## X X V

Two family events occurred in rapid succession. Daisy's baby was born and Aleece married. She was now twenty-four, but had seemed in no hurry to marry, probably because only one of her several admirers was eligible and she neither loved nor greatly liked him. His name was William Van Bergen, and for five years he had pursued her with true Dutch persistence.

Aleece was a curious *pasticcio*. Almost uncannily shrewd, naturally intelligent, with a quick and rarely faulty judgment of character, she never read a serious book in her life, and her worldly sense extended no further than dressing herself advantageously, holding herself as if she were one of earth's elect and disdained the common herd. During my married life I had tried to introduce her socially, but she gave me no help. Society didn't interest her, she said, but the truth was that her intense pride revolted at the idea of patronage from the smugly entrenched, whom she regarded as her inferiors by birth. I don't think she ever quite got over being a Uhlhorn, and I am sure she felt superior to me who was only a Horn. True, I was half a Franklin, but then she was Franklin plus Uhlhorn. She resented bitterly being poor and dependent, scrimping and bargaining, but, fundamentally parasitic and indolent, to seek to improve her condition by personal endeavour never entered her head. In her creed there was no escape, no career, save in marriage. With a keen appetite for life, and a gaiety of spirit, despite the melancholy that lay at the

roots of her nature, and fascinating all who came within the radius of her charm and her subtle coquetry, she secretly disliked most people, and her haughty spirit knew naught of compromise.

Of course her unfortunate childhood had left its complexes. What threatened to be a mortal disease had planted the seeds of melancholy, for, young as she was, she believed herself to be doomed, and lived in a shadowed world of her own. Rose was the only one who showed her any affection, for as she was ugly and sickly my mother's pagan nature was revolted and she took no pains to disguise the fact. All her maternal affection was expended upon Daisy, who was pretty, healthy, and clinging. My grandfather was always kind, but he felt nothing like the deep personal interest in the children that he did in me. They were merely two more females whose support he had willingly assumed; he sent them to expensive schools, where they learned nothing, and doubtless he realized that they had no latent intellect to cultivate, for he imposed no tasks on them at home. Daisy had character and courage and good sense but no mind for books, and Aleece, clever in some respects as she was, always had a mild contempt for intellect.

When, between the ages of nine and eleven, her diseased body was magically healed, she ceased to be subjective and began to take an interest in the world about her. They left the ranch a year after my marriage, and in San Francisco she had the society of girls of her own age. But although she developed the appetite for life that never left her as long as she lived, she made few friends. She was quite aware that she was growing up under a cloud; that as far as social position was concerned she might as well have been descended from a native of the Fiji Islands as from the ancient aristocracy of New York. For this she blamed my mother, and sometimes betrayed her contempt; nevertheless she was too young for real bitterness of spirit, and her



natural love of fun enlivened the somewhat sombre atmosphere of the house. She was determined to get what she could out of life, and hoped for better things on the morrow.

But her penetration, her instinctive knowledge of character, failed her when she made up her mind to marry William Van Bergen. He belonged to a wealthy family, who were all ready to welcome her, and he was her abject slave. True they were nobodies socially, but then she had persuaded herself that she despised San Francisco society, and she would live luxuriously, and have money in abundance to spend, with bargain counters forgotten. And although she would have liked something better, fate had denied her the opportunity to make a brilliant marriage, and she was not averse from having a slave for husband.

But she was quickly undeceived. Van Bergen told her on the way from the church to the train that he had married her only to take his revenge upon her for pulling him round by the nose for five years. He hated her and she'd now find out that no woman could get the best of a man. He'd break her spirit and make her grovel, as she – damn her – had made him grovel for five years.

He did break her spirit – for the time being – and she spent much of her time in tears. Greatly to our amazement, for we had always believed that the core of her nature was hard and that she would develop into a cold, calculating woman of the world. But she had no real stamina, she was always a child of circumstance, and she had inherited something of my mother's passive endurance.

Van Bergen occasionally added physical brutality to a calculated mental cruelty, but she stood him for several years rather than admit publicly – more especially to poorer men who had wanted to marry her – that she had made a mistake. To outward seeming she was successfully married. They lived well, and as he took a perverse pride in showing her off, she was always beautifully dressed. On the street,

in restaurants, at the theatre, she was admired as one of the handsomest young women in San Francisco. When she could stand it no longer and appealed to the courts, the Judge granted the divorce before she left the stand.

## X X V I

I NEVER did like living with other people, and after Aleece's marriage and the advent of a crying baby I took a flat of my own and furnished it from the house in Menlo Park. I was drifting once more, although busy with my stories, for I must remain in California until Mrs. Atherton's estate was settled. She had left me a legacy and I borrowed on it for my current expenses. Mr. Chamberlain also asked me to do a weekly column for the *Examiner*, but that didn't last long as I wrote to amuse myself and one firebrand on the paper was enough. When I remarked that a certain bloated lady whose husband was a power in the land looked as if she carried her millions in her stomach, Mr. Hearst concluded that I should add to his worries no longer. Poor man, he prided himself upon having the most brilliant editorial staff in the United States, but he paid high for the privilege.

They were a delightful crowd, highly educated, distinguished of manner, gay of spirits, witty in conversation. I gave Sunday breakfasts at my flat at which the pick of them were present: S. S. Chamberlain, editor-in-chief, with a dazzling record in New York and Paris behind him; 'Cosey' Noble, 'Ned' Hamilton, and others whose names I have forgotten. I had a Spanish cook, and the table was covered with ferns in lieu of a table cloth. These breakfasts were unlike anything ever given in San Francisco and acquired a certain celebrity. The women were the members of my old *salon*, none of whom had married. The con-

versation was often brilliant, but never pedantic, and no one was expected to 'show off.'

There were now newspaper women in San Francisco, and I made the acquaintance of several during my brief experience on the *Examiner*. I don't think any of them liked me, for they had the mistaken idea that I was rich and fashionable, and therefore a rank outsider, but as I was the State's only novelist, they used me as a drawing-card when they were ready to form themselves into a woman's Press club. I attended the first meeting out of curiosity, and there I met a woman who had come up from the South to advise them, and to whom they all bowed down as to an oracle. She was the most able and intellectual woman in California. I was informed, with a great purpose in life – the emancipation of WOMAN. I may add here that she was no false alarm, like so many local celebrities, but in time became nationally known as an EMINENT FEMINIST, although I think she was disappointed that she never rose to the leadership of her party. Why, may perhaps be inferred from the following episode.

As I had so far been able to take care of myself and owed nothing to any organization, I was not interested in her plans for the general emancipation of women, but she interested me personally as a curio, and I invited her to spend a few days with me. She accepted graciously, and I projected a breakfast and an evening party in her honour.

Being immersed in affairs she was not to arrive until ten p.m. At about eight the bell rang and as I was standing in the hall I opened the door. A freckled-faced grimy little boy in a man's hat stood there shuffling his feet. I asked what I could do for him and he muttered that he wanted to speak to his mother. His mother? Could it be . . . I knew that my guest was – or had been – married, but no mention had been made of a child. I was soon enlightened. He *was* the son of the oracle – and she had turned him out to sleep in a sand

lot! Being cold, hungry, and lonesome, he was seeking to improve his condition.

I took him in and turned him over to the cook, who gave him something to eat and made him a bed in a corner. When his mother arrived I told her that her offspring had tracked her down and she replied vaguely that she had left him somewhere, but in the press of work he had slipped her mind. He disappeared next morning – to heaven knows where.

The breakfast in her honour was an appalling affair. She evidently took my light-hearted gathering as an open forum and held forth didactically on the subject of woman: an opportunity not to be missed with all those influential newspaper men present. When we tried to divert her mind she recited 'Father Carved the Duck'!

The evening party might be called a tragic farce. She told me she had written a wonderful ghost story, and I conceived the brilliant idea of turning the assembly into a ghost party at which others should contribute their share of horrors when the star performance was over. We were all to sit in the dark. My *Examiner* luminaries flatly refused ever to be caught in the same room with her again; but – determined that all honour should be done her – I had invited Kate Douglas Wiggin, the pet of the *Century* set in New York, and already famous with her stories for the young; the William Crockers (Mrs. Crocker was as beautiful as the Queen of Sheba) and others of social eminence aside from the members of the *salon*; and James Brett Stokes, a young New Yorker, very popular in San Francisco Society, who could be relied upon to make a success of the supper that was to follow. My distinguished guest received them with the air of a celebrity accepting just homage. That woman inspired me with awe. She knew she was great and didn't hesitate to mention the fact.

The room was darkened. The potential author, seated

beside the fireplace, read by the light of a single candle. In a semi-circle before her sat Mr. and Mrs. Crocker, Rosa Barrera, and Mrs. Wiggin. The others were scattered about on sofa, divan, and chairs. As seats were limited I sat on the floor with one or two others behind the Crockers.

That was probably the worst story ever written, ghost or otherwise. Nor did it have the merit of brevity. It went on and on and on, in the author's nasal monotonous voice. An atmosphere of depression settled over the room. Sighs. Rustlings. Every one, I knew, cursing me in his or her heart.

And I, the hostess, rolled over and over on the floor in fits of strangled laughter at the dismay of those prisoners of silence. There they were and there they must remain, those trusting souls, excruciatingly bored, until that complacent female chose to release them. And that blessed moment did not occur for an hour and a quarter!

The applause was vociferous when she laid down her manuscript and looked expectantly at her audience. I cheered. She must have been gratified, but not half as much as we were. If she mistook our exuberance for the moment, however, I think, being no fool, she was enlightened before the evening was over. As there could be no question of further mental pabulum, I led the way at once to the dining-room, and reaction, a good supper, the bright lights, and Mr. Stokes's shandygaff made our spirits hilarious. There was a tacit agreement that she should not be permitted to open her mouth again, and she sat in tight-lipped silence, doing her best to exude a lofty disdain. When the guests left at midnight she stalked to her room and slammed the door.

She took her departure next morning with a few acid comments. She had had hopes of me, but she could now see that I was utterly frivolous and would never amount to anything. I was too much taken up with being a 'beauty'

and captivating men, too imbued with the conventionalities of a world that great women like herself held in scorn, to rise above my unfortunate condition and take a place among the elect. She washed her hands of me.

I could only reply that I was sorry if she hadn't enjoyed her visit, that my guests had been vastly entertained by her story, and that I felt honoured at having her in my house. And so forth. She looked as if she would like to call me the liar I indubitably was, but merely shook the dust of my flat from her feet and sailed out.

## XXVII

It was during this time that I first met Hilaire Belloc. Some time since, William C. Morrow, a short-story writer second only to Bierce and undeservedly forgotten, asked if he might bring two girls in whom he was interested to call upon me. Their names were Elizabeth and Elodie Hogan, and they had recently moved from their ranch in Napa to live in San Francisco. Both wanted to write, and he thought I might give them advice and encouragement.

Elodie was a beautiful creature, with hair like polished mahogany, eyes of a dark rich blue, delicate regular features, and a 'mantling colour.' She had neither figure nor style and dressed abominably, but with a face like that it little mattered, and she also possessed the twin gifts of personality and charm. Elizabeth was excessively plain, but it was patent at once that she had a strong character and a fine mind. She married, not long after, Garret McEnerney, one of the most brilliant lawyers in the State.

I took a great fancy to Elodie and saw her constantly. She told me much of 'Hilary' Belloc before he arrived in California. She had spent the previous year travelling with her mother and sister and had met him in London. He was

only nineteen and she was twenty-four, but they had fallen desperately in love. Both mothers opposed even a tentative engagement; Madame Belloc on account of her son's youth, to say nothing of Elodie's seniority, and Mrs. Hogan for similar reasons and because she believed her daughter was predestined by heaven to enter a convent. Elodie herself half-believed in the vocation, but loved her 'Hilary' and was very unhappy. I remember her sitting on the edge of my bed one morning crying into a cup of cocoa.

He had threatened to follow her to California, and she was praying he would not and hoping he would.

He did. As he had no money to speak of I believe he crossed the Atlantic in the steerage, and he must have walked across the continent. When he arrived he calmly informed Mrs. Hogan that he hadn't a penny in his pocket, and as Madame Belloc had shown them much hospitality in England she could hardly turn the son of the house out to sleep in the street. But she detested him, and he returned the compliment with interest. Poor Elodie was torn in twain.

He was not an impressive figure in those days. His hair was long and dusty, his hands and linen were never clean, and his clothes looked as if they had been slept in, which no doubt they had.

But he was a 'dynamic personality,' and his mind was so active and blazing that I was always expecting it to explode and burst through his skull. One evening he came to call on me alone, and remained until four in the morning. He sat huddled over the fire, his hands hanging between his knees, his shoulders above his ears, and talked and talked and talked. Such a flow of words I have never listened to, and every one of them sparkled. From his passion for Elodie and his determination to marry despite Church, Mothers, Youth and Poverty, he passed on to the affairs of the world, and, never before nor since have I heard any-one discourse so brilliantly. I sat in fascinated silence, re-

gardless of time, or of possible Grundys across the street. I still wondered how Elodie could have fallen in love with him, but when he turned on that extraordinary mind of his at full blast, I could have listened to him for ever. He almost convinced me that he knew more than any statesman in Europe.

He also told me something of his own aspirations. He intended to write, and to cultivate a style as simple as 'Mary had a Little Lamb.' What else was there left after the elliptical Meredith? Yes, he would create a sensation by his pellucid simplicity.

(He certainly described a wide arc before returning to this laudable ideal, for, during that tortuous period when he wrote his biographies of Danton and Robespierre, I remember the London *Spectator* aptly characterizing his style as 'metaphysical verbiage.')

It was several years before he accomplished the purpose that had brought him so heroically to California. Elodie was momentarily convinced of her vocation, and although I added my pleas to his – no one could help sympathizing with him – he was forced to throw in his hand and take an explosive departure.

## XXVIII

Not long after, I got tired of it all and went up to Fort Ross to write *The Doomswoman*. I was also persuading myself that I nursed a broken heart, although even then I was haunted by the uneasy suspicion that it meant but another book. The man was married! He was also unstable and tormenting. These qualities fascinated me at first, but having nothing of the canine in my nature, I grew resentful. And I enjoyed the tragic mood. I had never felt tragic before and might never have the opportunity again. I could



enjoy it even more if off in the wilderness by myself and spilling it into a book.

Fort Ross was a wild spot on the cliffs in the north. It had been built by the Russians in the early days of the nineteenth century as a protection against Indians while they engaged in the lucrative business of otter hunting. The Fort was surrounded by a stockade, and within it lived, in something like luxury, the Governor, his family, and staff. Soldiers paced the walls day and night. The hunting and curing was done by Russian convicts, camped down on the shore, and if, now and again, a man rebelled, he was taken out to sea and made to walk the plank. There was a story of a girl, a visitor at the Fort, stealing out to meet her convict lover in the mill beyond the enclosure; she arrived at the tryst too early, a discarded suitor turned on the machinery, it caught her long unbound hair, and she was whirled to her death. She now lay, I was told, in a copper coffin on the 'hillside at the entrance to the dark forest of redwoods that bounded the clearing. With a few contradictory details to go on, I wrote her story a few years later, a story that was 'lifted' bodily into a newspaper series of 'authentic tales' of early California, and no credit given.

The stockade was gone, the Fort and Church were in ruins, but there was an hotel of sorts, and in a large front room, with the sea thundering at the base of the cliffs, and the winter wind howling in the redwood forest behind me, I had a joyous time being unhappy and reconstructing the past with its passion and its tragedy. Of course I wrote the man out of me into the book, but this I would not admit for a moment. I nursed my broken heart when I thought of it, but for the most part I was too busy with the story to think of anything else. In the later afternoon, however, I paced the cliffs, and trod the dark aisles of the forest, feeling more romantic than ever before or since. I took care, however,

while in the forest, to keep close enough to an outlet to make a bolt if a wildcat spat at me from the limb of a tree or a panther thrust a nose through the heavy undergrowth; there were other howlings besides the wind, at night.

The destination of *The Doomswoman* was *Lippincott's Magazine*, at that time publishing a 'complete novel' in every number, and much in vogue with authors. Kipling, W. Clark Russell, Oscar Wilde, Bret Harte, Conan Doyle, Amélie Rives, Julian Hawthorne, Edgar Saltus, John Habberton, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Captain Charles King, James Lane Allen, were on that honourable roster, and I had felt flattered and encouraged when the editor, Mr. Stoddard, whom I met in New York, had asked me to contribute my next novel. There would be a photograph of me as a frontispiece, and a critical review of what I had already published. The editor also wanted me to visit him in Philadelphia when the number came out, and enjoy the added publicity of a 'tea.'

## XXIX

I SENT off the manuscript and returned to San Francisco; but I had no desire to remain there. It was years before I could contemplate without a shudder the prospect of living again in California, for its memories were still heavy with the boredom of my married life, of wasted years, vain dreams, insurmountable walls. I used to walk past those long rows of houses, drab, with bow-windows, as alike as a row of lead pencils in a box, visualizing the dull eventless lives of those that lived in them, depressing my own spirits to zero. The fog rolled in over the western hills, blotting them out. The fog-horn in the bay tolled like a passing bell. I doubted if anywhere on earth could one feel so isolated, so 'blue,' so stranded, as in San Francisco. Well had it

been called the Jumping-off Place. It might have been on another planet. To-day it is a handsome and interesting city, but in the 'nineties, despite the sentimentalists, it was grey and ugly and depressing. All very well for those who could pay a yearly visit to New York or Europe, but for those condemned by fate to live there uninterruptedly, there was nothing but numb acceptance. Or so it appeared to me as I passed those rows upon rows upon rows of drab houses with bow-windows, in one of which a woman occasionally sat sewing.

My family now lived in one of these rows. Craig was not doing well. The horizon was dark. I had a presentiment that it would be my lot eventually to assume the support of the family, and to do that I must make money. Aleece could contribute nothing; unless her mother-in-law made her a present she never had more than car-fare in her pocket. The American magazines, with the exception of *Lippincott's*, had refused to consider anything so remote in time as stories of Old California, and I had sent them abroad. *Blackwood's Magazine* had accepted one, and the London *Graphic* and other English publications took the rest, with the exception of *Pearls of Loreto*, which I placed, soon after my return to New York, with *Harper's Weekly*; Richard Harding Davis was the editor and not as hidebound as his reverend seniors. Before taking it to him I had offered it to Mr. Alden, editor of the *Magazine*. He was not even 'kind,' as so many editors were, however intractable, but gave me to understand that I was a mere cipher beside Amélie Rives – 'the greatest genius since Shakespeare' – and Mary E. Wilkins. We had 'words' towards the end, and I promised him tartly that I would outlive both of them.

But that came later.

British publications pay little; one must be content with honours. Nor was *Lippincott's* particularly generous. I hated New York, but at least I had made money there and no

doubt could make it again at that headquarters for literary wares. And it was certainly stimulating!

So I came to one of my abrupt decisions, telegraphed to Mr. Stoddart, and left a week later.

My last memory of my mother is standing by the bed sewing. Hers was one of the stranded lives. She had never left California since her arrival there at the age of eighteen, rarely San Francisco save for its hated alternative – The Ranch. She had longed to travel, but it was years since she had spoken of this old ambition; perhaps it was forgotten with all the other hopes she had buried.

I suppose she had her compensations. Her two grandchildren were adored and adoring. She was far from useless; and Rose, now growing rheumatic, waited on her as of old. Sewing – or, occasionally, nursing – was her only compromise with necessity. She would have starved before she would have so much as made herself a cup of tea, and she expected others to do all the thinking and planning. ‘Think!’ she exclaimed once to Aleece, who was considering a family problem. ‘How dare you ask me to think? I have never thought in my life.’

And yet every four years when the country was in the throes of a Presidential election, she was so violent in her support of the Democratic candidate that we used to go out and walk the streets to be rid of her. Strange mass of contradictions – fused merely into passive endurance.

I never saw her again. She died a few years later, at the age of sixty – died, as she had always dreaded to die, of cancer. If there is anything in reincarnation she may have been expiating the sins of a sinister past, and fate may since have relented and permitted her to return to a more fortunate sojourn on earth. Still, I suppose one retains some of one’s former traits, despite a period of discarnation out in the ether, and personally I have never met anyone in the least like her.

## X X X

I WAS to go directly to Philadelphia and be the guest of the Stoddarts for a week. *The Doomswoman* had been published a few days before, and they had invited all the literary and journalistic ornaments of Philadelphia to meet me at a tea. On the day after my arrival, however, I should be taken to Camden to bow at the shrine of Walt Whitman, and this prospect filled me with misgivings. I had been told I should have to kiss him, and he was very hairy, and averse from soap and water. A friend had written me that she had searched in vain for a clean spot before performing the rite. Great was my relief therefore when I picked up a newspaper on the train and read that he had gone to his eternal home. Not that I would have had him die, could science have saved him, but after all he was seventy-three and had been paralyzed for years; death must have come as a release. So I felt no pang of conscience as I drew a deep sigh of personal deliverance.

I was informed upon my arrival that at least four thousand persons would attend the funeral. Hating mobs, I declined to make one of them, particularly as vendors were pouring over to Camden to open booths for the sale of pop-corn, candy, toy balloons, drinks soft and hard. Mrs. Stoddart also preferred the peace and security of her hotel, and we congratulated ourselves when her husband returned and informed us that practically the entire four thousand were as drunk as lords. (Poor lords!) They remained drunk for several days, and their numbers included the local ornaments of literature and journalism. Only five women turned up at the tea. However, Agnes Repplier was one of them, and she was as sprightly and altogether delightful as her writings. It was Bierce who said of her that she had a bushel of brains between her ears.

In New York I rented for the summer a studio in the

Sherwood Studio Building, but I was barely settled when I received a telegram from home stating that the worst had happened. Fortunately the legacy from Mrs. Atherton had been paid over, and I knew I should be able to keep the family in comfort for a time. Shortly after, Ballard Smith, to whom I had brought a letter from Lawrence Rathbone, asked me if I would not like to visit the various mountain and seaside resorts and write a series of letters for the *World*. I had not much faith in myself as a newspaper woman, but accepted the offer as it seemed a godsend at the moment. I enjoyed the experience, and as Mr. Chamberlain also published the letters in the *Examiner*, I made quite a sum of money. I took care to suppress any ribald tendencies, and the letters, although as interesting as I could make them, were inoffensive. Dependents induce circumspection.

But no novel presented itself, and this worried me. I knew that my true *métier* was fiction, and that if I ever made a steady income it would be when I had found myself and been accepted by the public. For newspaper work I was temperamentally unfitted. I could not see my self interviewing Society women, who regarded reporters as door-mats, wangling my way into lavish entertainments where I should be expected to hobnob with waiters, or trying to get a story out of a murderer in his cell.

Elizabeth Jordan, then the star woman reporter on the *World*, interviewed me shortly after the publication of *The Doomsdwoman* in book form, and what she and other girl reporters told me of their vicissitudes and mortifications convinced me that this stratum of woman's endeavour was not for me. Miss Jordan had a masterful personality, and a Juno-like beauty that would give any girl confidence – she could hold her own; for that matter she was soon elevated to the editorship of the *Woman's Page*; but all those other girls who told me their woes disappeared in a few years,

worn out, body and soul. One wept as she related the arrogance and contempt with which certain fashionable women treated her, when, compelled to obey the orders of her editor or lose her job, she forced her way into their presence. It was hard enough to struggle for a living in competition with trained and antagonistic men, but women made it harder. I wonder they were not all anarchists, and certainly they were fertile soil for those seeds of revolt the leaders of the 'emancipation' movement were scattering abroad.

The owner of the studio returned from her summer in Europe, and I took another in the same building (there were small ones facing east that no artist wanted); and furnished it simply, but in harmonizing shades of green. There I settled down to await inspiration. I suppose New York was full of 'material,' but I have never been one of those fortunate writers who can go out and hunt for it. Themes come to me spontaneously or not at all; although many have been suggested by a chance remark, there was already something swirling about in my unconsciousness, waiting for the spark.

I wrote a number of short stories. They were unlike anything I had ever done before, belonging to a class that in the vernacular of the day would have been called subjective, and as great a contrast to the Old California tales as could well be imagined. I wasted no time on American magazines but sent them to *Vanity Fair* in London. The editor, Mr. Oliver Fry, wrote me that he would publish all I had of the sort, but there were only three or four that were short enough for a weekly magazine. Bierce, for the first time, gave me something like unstinted praise.

It was a curious lethargic year save for these spurts; little jets from a faculty both dormant and restless. Marion Crawford once said that an author always felt as if the world had ceased to revolve when he was not himself engaged in creation, and my conscience stabbed me when I

was enjoying myself with my friends or dreaming in my little studio.

And then inspiration for a novel came. A friend was dining with me in the restaurant of the Sherwood one evening, and we were discussing the trial of Carlyle Harris for the murder of his school-girl wife. New York talked of nothing else, and, for the most part, believed him guilty. The newspaper men did not; uncannily clever themselves, they respected Harris's brains too highly to believe that he, a medical student, would have administered such a traceable poison as morphine when he could have packed a capsule with the germs of cholera or typhoid.

I took one side and my friend the other. Suddenly she said: 'Why don't you write a novel on a similar subject? Nothing interests the public more than murder and suspense, and you are always trying your hand at something new.'

The idea made no appeal to me at the moment, but as the days passed I found it had taken possession of my mind. I began the book tentatively, plunging into the murder. But a distinctive heroine walked in, and convinced me that she was worthy of something better than a mere murder story. I determined to write her life history, using the crime as an introduction to the climax.

### X X X I

My lease of the studio was on the point of expiring and I concluded to go off by myself and write the book. For some reason I chose Yonkers, and a week or two later was established in a horrible boarding-house there; it was the best I could do, as there was no hotel in the little city, and the situation appealed to me. My room overlooked the Hudson with its sombre palisades and boats pushing their way through floating blocks of ice.

And then, when I settled down to work, with only the vaguest notion of what it was all to be about, a curious thing



happened. The faculty I had thought dried up, attenuated to the stature of the short story, burst forth like a geyser, and accumulated experiences, impressions, rebellions, deductions, poured forth in such abundance that I was almost confused, and sometimes wondered if I were destined to put everything I had ever known or heard of into that book. At the same time I did not in the least realize that I was expressing the general revolt of woman against the tyranny of man and his self-made world; the impressions I had received had been more or less subconscious, and I had taken no interest in the subject beyond a fleeting sympathy for individual cases. I was quite aware, however, that some of my own matrimonial experiences were creeping into the story, and that George was my heroine's temporary husband, doomed to extermination by poison. When I used to get particularly exasperated with him I would stamp my foot and exclaim: 'I'll put you in a book!' as the direst threat I could think of. And here he was, with all the stupid domestic tyranny of the male packed inside him and exuding it from every pore.

But I was an unconscious instrument, consumed with no holy fire in the cause of woman; if I had been told then that I was writing a pioneer book that would play its part in loosening the shackles of women both in life and literature, I should have been astonished – and quite indifferent. For the story, *qua* story, completely absorbed me, and I had never written anything with a more depersonalized enjoyment. It took me nine months and ran to something like a hundred and fifty thousand words. During the first three months I felt a slight nausea in the morning, and had all the other symptoms during the rest of the period except the actual pangs of delivery.

When the time came I went daily to White Plains to witness a murder trial, for I had no intention of making my book ridiculous by amateurish mistakes. It was merely the

trial of a policeman for killing someone as uninteresting as himself, but I needed only the technique of the legal procedure, and the general appearance of a court-room with all its details.

But I got something of even more importance – a hero for the story. I had been aware that the men who had so far influenced the heroine's life, including the one I had vainly tried to make her fall in love with, were inadequate to the proportions of the book. But before the first day of the trial was over I knew that I had her man. The counsel for the defence was Martin J. Keogh, the leading criminal lawyer of Westchester County. He was still a young man, extremely good-looking, and with a personality, voice, and method that fascinated me at once. That night I went back over the story and brought him in briefly at intervals in order to preserve the balance. Thereafter he took full possession, for I hadn't the least difficulty in making the heroine fall in love with him. I never met him, but when he died a few years ago, after a long and distinguished career as a Justice of the Supreme Court in New York, certain descriptive passages in my book were quoted in his obituaries.

Besides the week or two I was obliged to devote to the trial I had few interruptions. Muriel was in the Sacred Heart Convent at Manhattanville, New York, and more interested in being taken out occasionally than in study. I regarded maternity at that time as a highly specialized form of martyrdom, but when she could escape we spent the day on top of a Fifth Avenue bus, or looking in shop windows; always an hour in a restaurant, where, after the manner of school-girls, she devoured a sirloin steak and fried potatoes with an absorption that left me to my own thoughts. During the opera season I took her to hear the great singers of that day: The de Reszkes, Emma Eames, Melba, Calvé, Nordica, Plançon, Tamagno. We sat in the

highest gallery, but enjoyed ourselves none the less for that; and when, a year later, she attended a fashionable finishing school where a weekly attendance at the opera was part of the curriculum, she may have been more comfortable but hardly more enthralled.

Occasionally some of my beaux came up to see me, but I was too absent-minded to afford them much entertainment, and their visits grew less and less frequent. One of them informed me that I had lost my 'charm,' and I replied that I hoped it was all in the book.

I had recalled a name in the birth records of our family Bible, a hundred and fifty years old, and the title of the novel was *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times*. I sent it to several publishers. (Not 'every publisher in America,' as Jeannette Gilder asserted later in *The Critic*, but four or five.) It was declined on various pretexts. It was too long. Novels at that time rarely ran to a hundred thousand words, and as I was anything but a popular author whose new *opus* the public was anxiously waiting, I fancied it was quite likely that some of those publishers thought it hardly worth while to wade through that formidable mass of manuscript. I had not learned to use the typewriter, and my handwriting was anything but copperplate. Bierce used to say that he sweat blood every time he read one of my letters. Still, when I copied that manuscript for the third time, I did take extraordinary pains to make it legible, and those publishers who declined it on the ground of not liking the spirit of revolt in the book, or found it too 'sensational,' had certainly read it.

This time I had tried the older houses; I would have no more of makeshifts. Their refusals convinced me there was no hope for me in my own country, and I determined to go to England to live. If I made a reputation in the literary headquarters of the world, America would be forced to acknowledge me.

## BOOK IV

### I

THERE was an air of great repose in the London of the 'nineties. Men went late to business – and all wore silk hats. Nobody seemed to hurry. During the afternoon, and even morning, there were sauntering throngs in Piccadilly: men of leisure, who knew naught of business, save, perhaps, to sit on some board of directors, and whose main interests were hunting, shooting, racing, sport of all kinds, the innumerable diversions of the world of fashion. And, with the possible exception of the Viennese, the handsomest men on earth.

Even in the Strand there was little evidence of fret or rush. England was at peace with a peaceful world, and looked forward to centuries of dominance and prosperity. During the season the houses of Mayfair and Belgravia were gay with window-boxes, and Bond Street of a morning as gay with women in bright attire, as if in graceful challenge to the dour buildings on either side. During the long twilight Piccadilly was crowded with broughams and hansom cabs carrying men and women in evening dress to restaurants for an early dinner before the theatre or opera; if the night were warm, evening wraps would be flung aside, revealing superb gowns and sparkling jewels. But beautiful women and their distinguished impassive escorts averted their eyes from the north side of Piccadilly, for drifting along the *trottoir* were 'pretty ladies' in feathers and war paint, ready to be picked up by the casual male.

No man nor woman was admitted to a restaurant or to the stalls of a theatre unless in full evening dress. There were three or four balls every night, and during the afternoon all the world of fashion drove in Hyde Park, the

women in their flowered hats and summer gowns, looking like immense sweetly scented bouquets. Pedestrians stared politely, often mentioning them by name. It was the day of Professional Beauties, and their pictures were constantly in the weekly papers, their photographs exhibited in the shops, their portraits by fashionable artists hung annually on the walls of Burlington House. All the elderly women looked like stage duchesses, so erect and haughty were they, so serene, so satisfied with their supreme destiny. The Princess of Wales, Alexandra of Denmark, was the idol of all, and when she passed every hat was lifted, every neck bent. She had a canny fashion of including a dozen carriages – and thrice as many lookers-on – in one long inclination of her head, the enamel of her face undisturbed by the sweet flicker of her smile. The Prince rarely drove with her.

It looked the most care-free city in the world.

That was the day of great hostesses receiving aristocratic throngs at the head of noble staircases, a day when no one ‘crashed the gates’ and the word ‘profiteer’ was unborn, a day of political *salons* where all were of equal birth and breeding, and no hostess was called upon to submit to the indignity of shaking hands with a Labour M.P. Lady Randolph Churchill and her sisters, Mrs. Leslie and Mrs. Morton Frewen, Mrs. ‘Joe’ Chamberlain, Lady Curzon, Lady Cunard, Lady William Beresford, Lady Essex, Lady Lister-Kaye, Lady Naylor-Leyland, the Duchess of Manchester, the young Duchess of Marlborough, all Americans, were social luminaries, and their doings faithfully reported in the New York press.

If there were no wars, save on far-flung frontiers, hardly worth recording in the Press, there was generally some political excitement to furnish topics for conversation at dinners and *salons*. During that year of 1895, when I went to England for the second time, the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, and President Cleveland were engaged in a con-

troversy over the Venezuela Affair that made the horizon look dark for a moment; but both were statesmen and the cloud passed.

But that was later in the year. Shortly after my arrival the sensation of the hour was the arrest and trial of Oscar Wilde. He was at the height of his fame, his popularity, his financial success. No fewer than three of his plays were on the boards, their titles sprawling over omnibuses and hoardings. They disappeared overnight. Lucifer had hurtled from Paradise into the abyss; and if a gigantic bomb had exploded in the middle of London it could hardly have created more excitement. On the night before Lord Queensberry threw down his gage Wilde was dining at the Berkeley with three of the most notable and exclusive men in Great Britain: accepted as one of them by virtue of his genius and a social gift no less notable; before another nightfall all men were shuddering self-righteously at the mention of his name.

For three or four days after the trial began there was a full report in the newspapers, then a blank silence; some one's heavy hand, possibly Queen Victoria's, had come down on the Press, and no doubt Fleet Street echoed with editorial curses. I sent copies of those first issues to a friend in New York, but they must have been suppressed in the London Post Office, for they were never received.

Mrs. Humphry Ward was the Queen of Literature. The word 'great' was applied as freely then as now, and few doubted that Mrs. Ward was as great (and immortal) as Mr. Gladstone and others proclaimed her. She took herself with portentous seriousness, and so did her readers on both sides of the Atlantic. 'The trouble with you is,' said Dr. Robertson Nicoll to me a year or two later, 'that you don't take yourself seriously enough. You should study the secret of success in such writers as Mrs. Humphry Ward. A sense of humour is almost fatal in a novelist.' But I only laughed. Mrs. Ward seemed to me a horrible example.

Henry James, and deservedly, was spoken of with bated breath as 'The Master.' He dined out every night. Another distinguished American novelist was Harold Frederic, who was also the London correspondent of the *New York Times*, Kipling's star was high in the heavens, and Barrie's twinkled beside it. George Moore had come into his own. Arthur Conan Doyle had created Sherlock Holmes. Anthony Hope, Stanley Weyman, Hall Caine, Marie Corelli, sold by the ton. Du Maurier was famous as the author of *Trilby*, E. F. Benson of *Dodo*.

George Bernard Shaw was better known as the dramatic critic of the *Saturday Review* than as a playwright, but threatening to become famous at any moment. Stephen Phillips was the new poet. William Locke, Maurice Hewlett, Robert Hichens, Richard Le Gallienne, Henry Harland, George Egerton, Arthur Morrison, G. S. Street, Max Beerbohm, Agnes and Egerton Castle, Beatrice Harraden, John Oliver Hobbes, Max Pemberton, Israel Zangwill, Lucas Malet, Eden Phillpotts, Horace Annesley Vachell were at the beginning of their careers or well launched. Gilbert Parker was already popular. Fiona Macleod had come to life.

It is superfluous to mention Meredith or Hardy.

All the artistic world was ecstatic over the remarkable line drawings and fastidious elegance of Aubrey Beardsley in *The Yellow Book*.

Edmund Gosse was the most exalted Man of Letters, his only rival Andrew Lang of the 'elegant mind' and boorish manners. Pinero and Henry Arthur Jones were the playwrights of the moment. Ibsen was the rage. Henry Irving and Beerbohm Tree were the most eminent actors. Ellen Terry's star was dimming under the rising effulgence of Mrs. Patrick Campbell. W. L. Courtney, on the *Daily Telegraph*, Max Beerbohm on the *Saturday Review*, Dr. Robertson Nicoll in his *British Weekly* and *Bookman*, and the

*Manchester Guardian* were the critics whose approbation of a current book carried the greatest weight; and endorsement by the *Spectator* practically made a novelist.

## I I

I PLACED my book with John Lane of the Bodley Head in Vigo Street. He and William Heinemann were the fashionable publishers of the day, Lanc with his *Yellow Book*, his artistic bindings, and distinguished list of authors. But he put off publishing *Patience Sparhawk* for nearly two years, on one pretext or another, one of which was that he preferred to wait for the opening of his branch house in New York.

I remained but a short time in London. The Whistlers had gone to Paris to live. The William Sharps were away. I looked up none of the pleasant acquaintances I had made during my first visit, for I was determined to remain in the background until I had really accomplished something. It was six years since I had been in London before; no doubt my first little books were forgotten, and I as well. London has a great deal to give but the outside must give full measure in return: novelty, wealth, or achievement. My novelty had worn off. I could not dazzle London with splendid entertainments, even had this solution formed any part of my ambitions. But I knew that if *Patience* made the impression I hoped, and the enthusiasm of John Lane and his able staff led me to believe, I should become a 'personality,' and give as much as I received. If it fell flat, then I would write another novel, and still another until I achieved my purpose. Nor would I return to America until I had made my mark in England.

I did see several Californians who were living in London, among them Gertrude and Lloyd Lowndes, who had been intimate friends of Alece. Lloyd had joined us for a few



days in Monterey, and gone with us on several other expeditions. He and his sister were full of life and humour and deeply interested in my affairs; Mrs. Lowndes, in fact, had placed several of my Old California stories with English publications. Lloyd took me for long rides on the roof of buses, than which there is no better way to see London.

Ballard Smith was there, also, as correspondent of the *New York World*, and although, as I have said, I did not care to meet any one, he insisted upon taking me to dinner one night at the house of a friend who had expressed a wish to meet me and left a card. When I was putting on my wraps in her room she informed me casually that she had a lover. It was my first experience of the cool insolence of English women of the upper class, who regard themselves as above all laws.

I met Max Pemberton at the offices of *Vanity Fair*, and he asked me to write a novelette of ten thousand words for a series he was editing. I wrote it at Canterbury. It was my intention to spend the time intervening before the publication of *Patience* in travel about England, studying its life and people, and visiting certain literary shrines. There was nothing in particular to call me to Canterbury, but I thought it would be romantic to write a book in a cathedral close.

Canterbury is very beautiful, and to American eyes romantic enough, but I was about as comfortable there as I had been in Boulogne. A woman who had a tiny house in the close took me in. My room was hardly more than six feet square, and as the chimney smoked I wrote before an open window, wrapped in a blanket (there happened to be a cold spell that summer), closing the window when I was chilled through, opening it again when my eyes smarted intolerably from the smoke. Romance was somewhat blurred but the only alternative was a dingy looking hotel and it was outside the close.

However, I sat for an hour in the cathedral every day listening to magnificent music, and I met one or two of the wives of its dignitaries, who regarded me as an American curio, but gave me much interesting information. I had no intention then of writing about England, but I wanted to know it from the ground up. It was not only the home of my Franklin ancestors but the most interesting country on earth to me.

The book was finished and paid for and I set out for Haworth, the shrine of the Brontës. I had long since transferred my allegiance from Charlotte to Emily, who seemed to me the most interesting and tragic figure in all literature. But although I now regarded *Jane Eyre* as an old-fashioned melodrama, the fact remained that it was a pioneer book, a gesture of defiance at the traditions of its era, and my respect for the author was in no wise diminished. I had always intended to make a pilgrimage to Haworth and now was the time.

I arrived toward evening at the station in the valley, and embarked in a fly for the hill upon which the greater part of Haworth was situated. I thought I should never get there alive! The ascent was so steep that the driver twice swung the horses round at right angles to avoid disaster. Finally I got out and walked the rest of the way, leaving the fly to follow – if it could – with my trunk.

I paused for a moment on the crest of the hill to regain my breath, and looked out over the valley with its little towns and its factories. It was the end of a long day and the factory hands were an odd sight to me, plodding along, two and two, the women with shawls over their heads, pinned beneath the chin. On other heights were clustering villages, here and there a church spire. It was a scene of indescribable peace, but the workers slouched homeward with little of the buoyancy of youth in their bearing.

Haworth consisted of one long winding street ending at

the moor, with a few little irregular streets branching off, down the various angles of the hill for the most part. There was no danger of getting lost! I started up the street toward the Black Bull Inn. Children were trudging along, either from school or domestic errands, their wooden clogs making a not unmusical clatter on the cobbled road. They, also, had shawls pinned about their heads, but their faces were smiling and healthy.

I was much thrilled to be shown to a room that looked across the churchyard to the stone parsonage in which the Brontës had lived and suffered and died, all miserably. I wondered that any of them had lived to grow up, for the box tombs and mouldering headstones among the dismal yews crowded about the house, almost touching the walls; and I do not suppose that a damper churchyard exists anywhere.

The thrill passed when I discovered that I could read the inscriptions on the tombs crowding beneath my own window, and I set forth to find quarters less depressing. The landlord gave me no encouragement.

'Nobody in Haworth takes boarders,' he said. 'Everybody in this village has a bank account over at Keighley. They are very proud and independent, ma'am. Besides, if you don't mind my saying so, as no tourist ever stays here for more than a night, they'll think you are a little mad if you tell them you want to stay a month.'

Nevertheless, I strolled up the long straggling street, now deserted, for dusk had fallen. Lights were appearing in the houses, twinkling in villages on distant hills. But the twilight is long in England, and I knew I had time to accomplish something of my purpose before dark.

I reached the end of the street and looked out over the moor, an immense rolling expanse that melted into a horizon incredibly distant. For the first time I realized that the term 'purple twilight' was not a poetic fiction. By some curious

refraction the purple of the heather permeated the atmosphere, and all the world, as I stood with my back to the village, looked to be swimming in a violet mist. And no scene to me was more historic, for over that expanse of mystery and beauty the Brontës had strolled a thousand times, dreaming their dreams, rebelling at their narrow destiny, conceiving the books that had made them immortal. I determined to live as close to that moor as possible.

The two most promising houses I had seen were on my right. They were small, but looked comfortable and well finished. I knocked on the door of the first and was admitted by a pretty but rather wild-eyed young girl, who, when I asked to see her mother, showed me into the cold parlour, stared at me wonderingly for a moment and then disappeared. The tiny room, that looked as if no one ever sat in it, was purest Victorian: horsehair furniture, framed silhouettes, marble-topped table, Nottingham lace curtains.

The woman who came in presently, was short and rotund with a pleasant face and easy manner. She looked 'well-to-do,' satisfied with life, in no need of boarders to increase her bank account in Keighley. She shook her head when I told her what I wanted and even looked at me suspiciously. Recalling the warning of the innkeeper, I assured her I was quite sane, but was a novelist and had always wanted to write a book in the Brontë village. It was impossible to remain in that inn surrounded by tombstones, and besides I wanted to be close to the moor.

But she shook her head again. 'Oh no,' she said earnestly. 'Take in boarders? What would the neighbours think? My husband,' drawing herself up proudly, 'is a tailor in Keighley. We are quite well off. Nobody in Haworth more so.'

'You could tell your neighbours,' I replied, 'that it was an act of charity, and as I am sure they would not condemn me to that inn for a month; they will understand.' I rose.

'I'll not say any more to-night but shall return in the morning. Please think it over.'

She escorted me to the door, and once more gave me a suspicious look. 'What does a pretty young woman like you want to be writing books for?' she demanded. 'It seems to me you could make more out of your life than that. And I suppose you are rich too and used to more than you will find in this village.'

I laughed and assured her I was far from rich and that looks were merely incidental, also that I had no intention of doing anything but write as long as I lived.

'You're not divorced, are you?' she asked with irrepressible curiosity, and when I told her emphatically I was a real widow she looked less disapproving, but was still shaking her head when I departed.

### . I I I

I SLEPT that night to the sighing of yews and queer rustlings in that graveyard, but rose to a brilliant sunlight that filled me with hope. If that tailor's lady would not take me in I'd make a house-to-house canvass. Haworth was the most ideal village I had ever seen, and live in it for a month I would.

But my efforts were at an end. The daughter of the house had pleaded to have me accepted, and promised to do all the extra work an unaccustomed boarder entailed. She was a pupil-teacher, with no other diversion in her young life, and had never been farther from Haworth than Keighley; there was a fascinating promise of variety in an American boarder. She was a nervous highly strung girl, no doubt full of dreams and aspirations that could never be realized; even young men were conspicuous by their absence. She died insane a few years later.

I had long since ceased to expect comfort in my peregrini-

nations, and ignored the fact that my bed was indubitably stuffed with corn cobs, the spare room musty, even with the window open. The food was so good, however, that I suspected it cost more than the moderate sum they charged me, and they made me eat it alone in the parlour. I should have preferred to dine with them and listen to their talk, but they wouldn't hear of it. They regarded me with something like awe, and I am sure that despite my protestations they believed me to be one of those eccentric rich Americans all the world had heard of.

The girl waited on me devotedly, and when I sent to London for a five-pound box of American candy she was ready to sleep on my door mat.

It had seemed to me that Haworth was the place to re-write *The Randolphins*, for Nelly Gordon's parents had lived in Yorkshire, and possibly her father had known Branwell Brontë and caroused with him in the bar-parlour of the Black Bull Inn. So I went to work with enthusiasm, although I had no intention of disposing of the book at present. It may have made a sensation in San Francisco for purely local reasons, but it was far too tragic a story to appeal to any publisher unless there was a well-known name on the title page to carry it. The new hero, however, was a sensible man of the world, not the Ouidaish super-romantic figure of the original.

A very intelligent and interesting young woman, who is now Mrs. Percy Howe, and who has written me a birthday letter ever since, came to visit relatives next door, and with her I took many memorable walks over the moor. She showed me the favourite haunts of the Brontës; there was a dell where Charlotte was supposed to have written certain chapters of *Jane Eyre*. She also dropped in with me casually upon many of the villagers, and one old woman remembered Charlotte, who visited the poor at the beginning of every winter to make sure they were provided with coal and

other necessities. Of Emily, oddly enough, there were no traditions, but many of the attractive and dissipated Branwell. I used an item of information given me by a village ancient in *A Daughter of the Vine*, and repeat it here.

'If 'ee'd a-conducted hisself,' the old man mumbled, 'ee'd a-bin the wonder of the fam'ly. Mony a time ah've seen 'im coom into tha Lord Rodney Inn, 'is sharp little face as red as tha scoolery maid's 'ands, and rockin' from one side of tha 'all to tha other, and sit doon at tha table and make a caricature of ivvery mon that coom in. And once when 'ee was station master at Luddondon Foote ah 'ave 'eard as 'ow a mon coom runnin' oop just as the train went oot, and said as 'ow 'ce was orful anxious to know if a certain mon went off. 'Ee tried describin' 'im and couldn't, so Branwell drew picters of all the mons as had left, and 'ee recognized the one as 'ee wanted.'

I had hoped to hear legends of the Gordons, but the oldsters had no memories of any part of Yorkshire but their immediate corner of it. I knew that Mr. Gordon had been one of the wild young bloods of his county, and on a drunken sprec had married the barmaid who was to be the curse of his life and of Nelly's. She was also the cause of his emigration to California, for, quite aside from the awkward position in which he had placed a proud family, he soon realized the frightful mistake he had made and preferred a life among strangers.

There was a little museum in the village, founded by Lord Crewe and devoted to Brontë relics; it was visited every year by hundreds of tourists. One night the curator, with the air of a conspirator, let me in, locked the door behind us, lowered all the blinds, and then opened those sacred cases that contained the manuscripts of *Jane Eyre* and (I think) *The Professor*, that I might turn over the pages and read as long as I chose. My only regret was the absence of the manuscript of *Wuthering Heights*.

The other objects in the museum were pitiable. No servant-girl to-day would live in a room with such furniture – nor wear such clothes! If I remember aright Charlotte's wedding-gown was of flimsy brown silk, the veil of Nottingham lace; in other words, coarse net. The collar of Emily's dog, Keeper, looked as if it had cost more than both dress and veil. One of the Branwell relics was a life of Nelson, and he had written notes on the margin expressing sympathy and admiration for Emma Hamilton.

I never got inside the parsonage. The incumbent had been so exasperated by tourists that he had conceived an unpriestly hatred of all Americans, and vowed that not another should cross his threshold. One or two of my friends pleaded with him, but he growled and turned his back. However, there was the church, beneath which lay all that was left of the Brontës, their names inscribed on tablets within the communion rail. And to keep me out of that historic church was beyond his power.

When I left, my kind hostess put up a train luncheon for me, and on the following Christmas sent me a box of mince pies and plum cake, to which several of the neighbours had contributed. I had heard much of the dourness of the Yorkshire people but saw nothing of it myself.

## I V

FROM Haworth I went to the Lake country, but after ten days at Windermere, during which it rained for nine, and I sat in my room reading such ancient novels as the small town library afforded, I gave up in disgust and went to a farm on the Bolton Abbey estate in the West Riding of Yorkshire, recommended by Mrs. Howe. The old farm-house had descended from father to son – as tenants of the Dukes of Devonshire – for eight hundred years and looked as if it



would weather eight hundred more. My insufficient windows had small diamond panes, and I was certain that a rat lived behind the wardrobe, for I heard mysterious sounds at night. The farmer looked like the patriarch of a tribe, and spent his leisure reading the Bible in the oak-raftered living-room, although he talked to me occasionally of the injustice of landlords in raising the rent when a farmer improved his property. Of course I sympathized with him, and to this day it strikes my untutored mind as unfair, like raising the price of commodities when they are scarce.

I made it a practice wherever I went to read the local chronicle, and that of this district was particularly interesting because of the famous River Wharfe (we should call it a creek in America), a narrow turbulent stream with a dark history. It roared along through the woods between high gloomy banks, and at one point was so narrow that an active man could leap across; but a slip meant death. 'The Striding Place' was immediately in front of a ledge in midstream beneath which was a suction so powerful that no man who fell in could escape it. He disappeared under the ledge with the speed of light, to be flung out later, mangled and unrecognizable, into the boiling waters beyond.

This striding place is called the Strid;  
A name which it took of yore.  
A thousand years hath it borne that name,  
And it shall a thousand more.

Wordsworth had been inspired to write a poem on 'The Boy of Egremond,' a venturesome heir of these ancestral acres who had been done to death in the Strid, and I read it in the local history.

I haunted that spot, fascinated, and consumed with a desire to write a gruesome story of the Strid, but could think of nothing. I anathematized my imagination, which, it seemed to me, should have been jarred into immediate

action. One night I determined to try an experiment. Just before dropping off to sleep I ordered my mind to conceive that story and have it formulated when I awoke. And the moment I opened my eyes, there it was. I wrote it out before leaving the bed. It was called *The Striding Place*, and eventually published in the London *Speaker*. I sent it first to *The Yellow Book*, but it was declined by the editor, Henry Harland, on the ground that it was 'far too gruesome.' It seems to me the best short story I ever wrote, and it was even more of a triumph to appear in the *Speaker*.

After visiting a number of other villages and towns I came to anchor in Linby, close by Newstead Abbey, the ancestral home of Byron, where I intended to settle down and copy out *A Daughter of the Vine*, of which I had written but the rough draft in Haworth. Linby was a small straggling village not far from the colliery town of Hucknall-Torkard, where Byron lay in the family vault of a church built generations before the discovery of coal. There was a time when one could go down into that vault and gaze upon Byron, who had been embalmed, so to speak, in spirits at Missolonghi, but American tourists had chipped off so much of the coffin that he had been sealed from mortal gaze long before my day. Not that I had the slightest desire to look at him. I have never looked at a dead body if I could help myself.

Wandering through the not very attractive village of Linby after I left the train I decided that the rectory lodge was the most hopeful prospect. I therefore walked in, informed a small dark and rather startled young woman what I wanted, and offered her two guineas a week — quite a price for village accommodation at that time. She accepted without an instant's hesitation, and sent her husband to the station for my trunk.

Once more I was uncomfortable but satisfied. The rector's wife called, and I dined at the parsonage; then she dropped me abruptly and barely nodded in passing. Of course she

had never heard of me as a writer, and no doubt came to the conclusion, her first curiosity satisfied, that I was hiding under an assumed name after some public scandal. What else would bring a young woman of my sort to live in an obscure village? True, every time she passed the lodge she could see me writing at my table, but that might mean anything or nothing. At any rate I was no Mrs. Humphry Ward, and she was a fair type of the provincial snob who despises anyone that has not arrived. Although I had found her a bore I was rather sorry to be deprived of the opportunity to study her farther.

I remained through what was left of the winter, and would have stayed longer, for I had other work in mind and liked the English country, but Aleece unexpectedly joined me. She had obtained her divorce and a small alimony, and the first use she made of her freedom was to leave for England. I was delighted to see her and for days we did nothing but giggle; my landlady told me that every so often she had to go outside, shut the door and explode. But Aleece had not come six thousand miles to live in an English village, and after I had taken her through Newstead Abbey, she insisted upon an immediate migration to London.

I had seen Hilaire Belloc several times since my arrival in England – Elodie was a postulant in Baltimore, and he sought me out to talk about her – and through him I had met his sister, now Mrs. Belloc Lowndes, the popular writer of crime stories. I wrote to her asking for advice in regard to lodgings, and she very kindly found comfortable ones for us in Westminster.

## V

STILL, *Patience* slumbered in the safe at John Lane's office in Vigo Street. It was impossible, I now found, to pursue my original plan of remaining in obscurity until I stood for

something; Aleece was determined to 'see life,' and to deny her after all she had endured would have been downright cruelty. But I hoped we should be able to confine our circle to Americans.

I knew James Roosevelt Roosevelt, First Secretary of the American Embassy, and took her to one of his 'days.' There we met Americans living in London who showed us some hospitality; one of them invited us to her house-boat on the Thames for Henley regatta.

This woman was a study, and there were others of her kind. Her wealth was recent, and possibly enormous, but she had no position in her own country. She therefore came to London, took a large house in Mayfair, got herself presented at court, no doubt through political pull with her ambassador, was always to be seen on reception days at the embassy and the houses of the secretaries, invited every one she met, who looked at all promising, to her own 'palatial residence,' was invited in return, and now enjoyed something of a position. Her ambition was to establish herself in New York eventually, her immediate aim to dazzle such members of the 'Four Hundred' as she met at the embassy, and came out of curiosity to her lavish entertainments, into believing she was a 'real swell' and worthy to be taken into the fold. Her principal bait were those members of the British aristocracy who will accept any rich American properly endorsed by her embassy.

I doubt if she ever realized any of her ultimates, for despite her correct gowning and grooming, her assumption of the grand air, she was inherently common and to achieve repose was beyond her. We sat down to the first luncheon on the house-boat, while others paced hungrily the deck above. Our hostess, as in duty bound, presided, but she ate nothing, took no part in the conversation; she scowled, tapped her fork nervously on the table, and finally blurted out that we talked too much, and she wished we would re-

member that if we were not hungry other people were! The secret of her nervousness was that two or three women of title were expected and she was in a fever lest they be offended at being obliged to wait for the second table. It is safe to say that no one at the first ever accepted her hospitality again.

Somewhere we met Mrs. T. P. O'Connor, one of the prettiest and most charming women in London, an American with a soft Southern drawl. She had a house in Chelsea and entertained extensively during the season. Although married to a Member of Parliament she was not a political hostess, and at her house, more particularly at her garden parties, one met the more distinguished members of the literary and artistic world. I had looked forward to attending these parties in the future, but not until I had won my bays. I was overruled, however, for she took a great fancy to Aleece, and I had no reasonable excuse to decline her hospitality.

Her garden parties were brilliant affairs, and it was at our first of them that I met Henry James and had the conversation with him I have already recorded. It was a warm summer day, and the large garden behind the house was well filled with *celebrities*. Anthony Hope was there, a bald-headed but good-looking young man with charming manners; John Oliver Hobbes (Pearl Craigie), a short dark woman who would have been plain but for a pair of remarkably fine eyes; Marie Corelli, with much befrizzed mouse-coloured hair, wearing pale blue silk, and carrying a lap dog under her arm; Arthur Conan Doyle, dignified and dull; Aubrey Beardsley, who looked as if he might die at any moment; Beatrice Harraden, whose *Ships That Pass in the Night* was still quoted; Richard Le Gallienne, with his profile hung up in the air; Geneviève Ward, an American actress who had made an honourable position for herself in London; Bernard Shaw, a mild beneficent-looking man with what my future brother-in-law, Ashton Stevens, would have

called a be-Jesus beard; Shannon, the fashionable portrait painter who had deserted America for the more appreciative London; John Hare, the popular actor-manager; Dr. Robertson Nicoll; Sir Walter Besant; and Richard Whiteing, more leonine, more like Rochester than ever. I was so interested that I soon forgot myself.

## V I

MR. WHITEING appeared glad to see me again, and fell an immediate victim to Aleece. He invited us to dine with him on the following night at his house in Mecklenburgh Square, Bloomsbury, where he lived with the Corkrans.

That was a singular household, and I have often wondered it has not before this figured in some work of fiction. Miss Alice Corkran, delicate in health, sad of expression, both stately and sweet, had, although much younger, something of the built-up look of Lady Wilde. I sometimes doubted if she had had a new frock for twenty years. Hers was a truly angelic nature, chastened by much suffering; she must have been about fifty at that time. Her sister, Henriette, a year or two younger, was her antithesis: a woman of violent nature, inhibited and repressed by circumstance, full of magnetism and malice, her highly coloured face ugly and sensual, but often sparkling with intelligence. If she had married in her youth and raised a crop of children, she would have made a place for herself in the social order, but as it was she was a stranded old maid who found a diabolic pleasure in making others uncomfortable. Mr. Whiteing and Miss Alice were her principal butts, and she never hesitated to mortify them in public. Miss Alice took refuge in a quiet dignity, but Mr. Whiteing flushed and growled. As he had an editorial position on one of the leading newspapers, I fancy he contributed more than his share to the support of the establishment, and it must have struck him as ironic that

Henriette seasoned his food so liberally with gall. Miss Alice was editor of the *Girls' Realm*, the author of two or three not very remunerative books for young people; and she, Henriette, and 'Uncle Charley' – an extremely elderly gentleman whom we used to hear running up and down his room to warm himself before going to bed – must have had little else in the way of income; not enough, certainly, to live on apart, and the others were forced to endure Henriette.

Poor Mr. Whiteing! Only his long-standing affection for Miss Alice and a sense of duty kept him a member of that household, for I doubt if a day passed that Henriette did not plant a well-aimed dart. We lunched there one Sunday, and he had invited Alece to go somewhere during the afternoon. The dining-room was on the ground-floor, and after the meal was over we went to the front door to see them off: Mr. Whiteing handsome and distinguished in his Sunday best, Alece looking very lovely, very young. 'Taking your daughter out for a walk?' cackled Henriette. 'That's what you'll hear on all sides!' Mr. Whiteing gave her a murderous look, but he was a quick thinker, and turned to his indignant companion with a smile. 'I wish to God you were,' he said fervently, and Henriette for once was nonplussed.

Miss Alice lisped and had a slight accent; she had spent her youth in France. It was there she had met Mr. Whiteing and he had become virtually a member of the family while Mrs. Corkran was alive. The Corkran background was an old intimacy with the Brownings, whose son they still visited in Venice. Miss Alice told me of that unimaginable time when money came rolling in from *Aurora Leigh*, Mrs. Browning's now forgotten novel in verse, while poor Browning's own published poems were ignored by the public and sneered at by the critics. His one claim to fame at that time was his beautiful devotion to an invalid wife whose name was on every tongue.

But Henriette, despite gentle headshakes from Miss Alice and scowls and grunts from Mr. Whiteing, related with far more gusto that Browning, after his wife's death and his return to London, had his now famous head so turned by worshipping duchesses that he found little time for his old friends, and was dying to marry a young girl, but dared not shatter an ideal. Life would be tame without the Henriettes.

They also had been intimate with Una Hawthorne, eldest daughter of our premier novelist, and a water-colour of her tragic face hung in the drawing-room. I believe she died in their house.

The Corkrans had something of a *salon*, and the long drawing-room overlooking the leafy square was always well filled on Thursdays. One met there novelists who had had their day and were now forgotten, like Miss Braddon and Mrs. Alexander, a few struggling aspirants, but not many of the fashionable authors. There were, however, those of solid if somewhat academic reputation in letters, more than one important editor and critic. I fell into the habit of going there nearly every Thursday when I was in London for the season and I never found that drawing-room empty. The English can be extraordinarily faithful, ignoring poverty and failure, and Miss Alice's friends never thought of deserting her for more modern *salons*. She stood for something; one of the last outposts of the old order. And then there was Henriette, who kept every one on the *qui vive*, and Mr. Whiteing, always vivacious and agreeable.

It was there I first met May Sinclair, then an obscure young writer in whom Miss Alice and Mr. Whiteing took a keen interest, for they were always eager to encourage talent. Shortly after my arrival in London from New York, Mr. Fry had asked me to review books for *Vanity Fair*, and had sent them to me during my wanderings. One arrived with a note from a friend of the editor, begging me to read it carefully and praise it if I could, for it was by a young



writer whom he was sure would 'do great things some day.' The name on the title-page was May Sinclair, which I took to be a romantic pseudonym. It was a very bad novel and I gave it a scathing review.

I had forgotten the incident when I met her one Thursday at the Corkrans', but she referred to it immediately. 'You were very hard on me,' she said, 'but I know now that you were right. It was an amateurish book, but I hope to do better in the future.'

No one could help admiring one so modest and so honest, and, looking at her keenly intelligent dark little face, full of determination and character, it took no great amount of prescience to assume that she would accomplish her ambitions. She certainly cherished no rancour, for years later, when she was in the chair at a dinner given me by the Lyceum Club, she spoke of *Patience Sparhawk* and the impetus it had given to the spirit of independence in women.

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## V I I

ALEECE was eager to see something of France, and at the end of the season we started for Pont Aven near the coast of Brittany. We had met Hannah Lynch at the Corkrans', and she invited us to spend two days with her in Paris as 'paying guests.' She was another tragic figure, but not, alas, destined to immortality. She wrote exquisite prose and her intellect was of a high order, but she had neither imagination nor charm; a few critics lauded her but to the public she was not even a name. She was poor and plain and embittered, but got something out of life, for she lived in the Paris she loved and had distinguished and devoted friends there. 'And she manages to travel a lot,' said Henriette, who was making faces behind Hannah's back. 'Travels all over Europe on sixpence a year. Wish she'd tell me the secret.'

Aleece was not anxious to accept the invitation. 'I know she's one of those Bohemians,' she said, 'or she wouldn't dress like a rag-bag and talk about herself all the time. The literary swells are all right, but I've no use for scrubs.'

Nevertheless, we went, and toiled up five flights of stairs, followed by grunting porters with our trunks. When we reached Hannah's aerie, however, we had a splendid view of Paris, and directly beneath the windows was a convent garden with nuns pacing the leafy paths.

Hannah undertook to be our guide and there never was a vaguer. We followed her past miles and miles of pictures, doubling and redoubling as she searched in vain for some obscure gem she was determined to show us. We rescued her more than once from being run down by cabs, for she would plunge across a street looking neither right nor left. And Aleece's worst fears were verified: Hannah came to the breakfast table in her nightgown with face unwashed and tousled hair. On the second day she forgot to get anything for dinner and we had to go out and buy a cold chicken.

'I wish to God,' said Aleece bitterly, 'that you were not so fond of freaks. You'll listen to me next time. And one thing I *won't* do: stay here when we return. I'll sleep in the street first.' But this time I made no protest.

### V I I I

PONT AVEN was a grey straggling village filled with dour-faced men and sad-faced women in picturesque white head-dress – sad because the men went every third year to the *grande pêche* off the coast of Iceland, and some never returned from those stormy seas.

There was a *bois d'amour* where the young people strolled at night and pledged their vows, and, close by, an ancient cemetery, cold and grey and desolate, where lay those who had survived the *grande pêche*, and many widows.

We arrived in time for a *pardon*, the yearly festival in which all the living took part; priests in their glittering robes; young men in their gala costume of black and silver, holding flaming standards aloft; solid masses of girls in flapping white *coiffes* and collars, black frocks, and aprons of ribbon and lace. The old trudged or tottered behind. All chanted slowly and softly, marching through the village, past the cemetery with its generations of dead, then into the church for the final ceremony.

When the services were over, the young people danced in a shed open at the sides, danced as solemnly as they did everything else, as unsmilingly as if performing at a wake. But they managed to look picturesque at all times, and never more so than when washing the village linen down at the creek that flowed to the river.

In the centre of the little square of Pont Aven was a calvary on its pile of stones, as ancient as the church, and surrounding it were grey naked houses and two hotels. The one in which we had engaged rooms was a family hotel and much patronized by the English, who knew how to enjoy a summer in France economically. A deadly respectable lot.

The other hotel was for the artists who swarmed in Brittany every summer and found Pont Aven an inexhaustible source of inspiration. They were not expected to be respectable and generally brought their mistresses along. There was one independent lady of commerce there that summer, and when she found no one succumb to her wiles she would pace up and down the square all night, screaming at the top of her voice.

Horace Annesley Vachell and a cousin of his were staying at the bachelor hotel. Vachell was after copy and also liked the society of artists. His cousin, who was a conventional man of fashion, wore a perpetual look of disgust, and departed shortly after our arrival.

The most famous person at that hotel was the English

poet, Ernest Dowson, who had lived in Pont Aven for a year or two. He was in dire disgrace, for it was only a month since he had got very drunk one night, leaped through the window of a baker's house, and demanded the wife of that pious citizen. He had been haled off to prison by the indignant husband, and condemned to spend two weeks in a cell.

Vachell, who was of a philanthropic turn, was eager to give him a 'leg up.' 'It hurts me to see him so cowed and wretched,' he said to me one day. 'He is really a genius – and what a fate! Only twenty-nine and already an outcast! If one could only keep him from drinking he might pull up and become a brilliant figure in London. He is terribly poor, but what he has written has been received with such acclaim by the critics that anything he wrote would be well paid for, and he could soon reinstate himself. But he won't even write. I am sure. . . .' And he looked at me expectantly.

'Well?' I asked, looking at him.

'If you would only let me bring him over . . . It must be years since he has spoken to a decent woman – if he ever knew one! If he thought you took an interest in him . . . who knows? . . . it might mean a rebirth. . . .'

I shrugged. 'I have never looked upon myself in the light of a reformer! But I've read *Cynara*, and his translation of Couperus's *Majesty*. He is one of the most beautiful writers living, and it would be interesting to see what he looks like. Bring him along.'

Vachell's face glowed, but fell in a moment. 'If I only can! If I can only persuade him! But he's naturally shy, and just now in the depths. He slinks about the hotel with his eyes down, avoiding every one, and I had to pursue him before I could get him even to speak to me. But now I think he is convinced I am his friend, and he talks to me quite freely. Yes! Sooner or later I'll induce him to meet you. The interest of a woman is what he needs to restore his self-respect.'

It was several days before he accomplished his purpose. Every day after luncheon we drank our coffee at little tables on the *terrasse* before the hotel. Aleece and I were sitting together when we saw Vachell crossing the Square with a sad-looking object shambling beside him: a small man with nothing of youth in his bearing. He wore a black sweater, he was unshaven, his hair was long and dusty, his eyes were green, his lips looked like a smudge of red sealing wax, and he had no front teeth. Aleece took one look at him. 'Another freak,' she muttered, raised her parasol and sauntered off – her nose in the air.

Vachell introduced him with ceremony and enthusiasm. 'This is the famous Ernest Dowson, whose work you so admire. I know you have a great deal in common, so I will leave you to have a long talk.' And he hurried after Aleece, looking like a boy scout who had done his daily deed.

Dowson fell into a chair. His eyes shifted from right to left. He looked like a trapped wild thing of the forest. I offered him coffee, and he accepted politely, but left it untasted. I began by flattering him, that being the shortest cut to the subjugation of any author, but he merely flushed a dull red and mumbled unintelligible replies. I talked of personalities in London, other poets whom he must have met. His eyes grew more and more hunted; he looked as if what teeth he had left would chatter in a moment. It was evident that he had no intention of being rude, for he was a gentle soul, but he was almost paralysed with fright. To utter two consecutive sentences was beyond him.

Finally I took pity on him, and turned to speak to some one at an adjoining table – a British matron with a look of stern disapproval on her florid face – and he embraced the opportunity to slink away.

'Well!' I said to Vachell, when he came over that evening. 'I did my duty, and much good it did your protégé. I nearly frightened him to death; but I hope you're satisfied.'

'No, I am not!' Vachell was emphatic. 'I didn't expect much at first, for I know how shy and ashamed he is. You must keep it up! You must try again! You surely found him interesting?'

'He looks like a lost soul,' I said. 'And as I never met one before – yes, I was interested. But I feel as if I had tried to haul a load of stones uphill and never got there. What is the use?'

But Vachell was a man of persistence, as he proved by overcoming obstacles in his own career. He gave me no peace until I consented to make a second effort.

The only friend we had made in our hotel was a Mrs. Trulow, an American artist who had a large front room fitted up as a studio. She was a woman of the world as well as an artist of some ability, and even Alece found her companionable. She was much interested in the experiment of reforming a down-at-the-heels poet, and suggested that I ask him to tea in her studio.

I accordingly wrote him a note both formal and friendly, and, much to my surprise, received a charming acceptance. The poor thing had all the instincts of a gentleman, which made his fate the more sad.

Alece, after some demur, consented to be present, and promised neither to elevate her nose nor to giggle. It was her excited cry that called us to the window as the clock struck four. 'Come look! He's dressed up!'

We hung out of the window gasping. His hair had been cut, he was freshly shaven, he had attached a white collar and cuffs to his black sweater, and he wore what looked like a new pair of white shoes. (I learned afterwards that Vachell had found them in his wardrobe and coated them himself.)

He looked shy and frightened enough as he entered the studio and might even then have backed out, but Vachell sternly seated himself before the door. We did succeed in

putting him at his ease, however, Even Aleece entered into the spirit of the thing, and I don't suppose that three women, before or since, ever made more fuss over a man. We treated him like a king, seated him in a stately chair, waited on him hand and foot, hung breathlessly on his words. He thawed from moment to moment; and at the end of half an hour there was not a trace of embarrassment left.

I had told Vachell to make him bring his volume of poems, and when he had drunk three cups of tea, and eaten sandwiches and cake, I asked him to read *Cynara* to us and he complied at once.

That reading of *Cynara* was the most impressive performance of its kind I have ever experienced. It is a poem of four long stanzas, and from beginning to end he read it in a low monotone that never varied for an instant. No accentuation, no rising nor falling inflection. A lost soul intoning in space. Even Aleece was deeply impressed and the artistic Mrs. Trulow was reduced to pulp.

We showered him with broken congratulations when he finished, and he departed with his head in the air, escorted by the triumphant Vachell.

## I X

My blood was now up and I determined to 'reclaim' him. I took him for walks, and taught him to open my parasol, and help me over rough places. I pretended to be frightened when we met cows in the road, and he shooed them off valiantly. He never neglected to wear his collar and cuffs, shaved himself every day, no longer shambled, and all shyness had fled. I longed for the moment when I felt I knew him well enough to persuade him to invest in front teeth.

We talked of everything but himself, and I made no attempt to force his confidence. My object was to divert his

mind and renew his interest in life. He told me much of Gauguin, who had had a house in Pont Aven until recently, and of course we discussed the authors and poets of the day threadbare. He was also much interested in all I could tell him of California.

Vachell was obliged to return to England, but we were to remain for another fortnight. 'I leave Dowson to you as a solemn responsibility,' he said in parting. 'You have accomplished wonders; he hasn't been drunk since that day in the studio; but there is much to do yet. Try to persuade him to return with you to England. I know that he is writing again.'

I must have looked as beneficent as I felt and he went away happy. Curious the effect that 'doing good' has on one. Nothing inflates the ego more. It induces a self-hypnosis that gives one a supreme confidence in one's own ability to accomplish one's highest and best. The human mind has an infinite capacity for self-delusion.

One day Dowson and I passed a little stone house, dignified by the name of *château*. It was to let and we went in and wandered about. 'I could write here!' I exclaimed impulsively. 'I've a great notion to take it for the winter.'

Dowson turned to me with sparkling eyes. 'Oh!' he exclaimed. 'Oh, do! And then I could come and sit by your fireside every day.'

I had an immediate vision of glowing logs, rain beating without, Dowson reading aloud to me his latest poem, listening critically to my latest chapter.

'I believe I will!' I had never felt more enthusiastic. 'And *will* you come every day?'

'Will I!' He stared about him as if the bare little room held a vision of paradise. 'Last winter I had no one to talk to.'

'If Aleece will only consent,' I said with sudden mis-giving. 'She loves London. And it *would* be dull for her.'



'Well, you say she has friends there.' His tone was impatient; he didn't like Aleece. 'Can't she go back by herself?'

'I'm afraid she wouldn't . . . but perhaps she'll stay if I can convince her I could write better here than in London.'

But she would not! She stared at me with cold angry eyes when I dilated upon the charming little 'château' I had found, my desire to write in it, and to keep Dowson under my protecting wing.

'I never heard such nonsense in my life!' she exclaimed. 'Bury yourself in this hole all winter, and you at the real beginning of your career? You've got to keep after John Lane, and you'd be an idiot not to be in London when your book came out. You have said over and over that London is the place for you, you have made friends who are interested in you, and you shouldn't let go for a moment. You made mistakes enough in New York; don't make any over here. It isn't everyone who has a second chance. And you haven't even the excuse of being in love with the man. Nor is he in love with you; he just clings to you because there's no one else and you flatter him to death. And what of me? Didn't I come to England to be with you and forget all I've been through? I adore London and I'm going back, and you're no kind of a sister if you don't go with me.'

Of course she prevailed. Moreover, as she took care to point out, it would have cost a good deal to furnish the 'château,' and all I bought I should have to leave behind me; I had no intention of 'setting-up' in London.

Dowson looked crestfallen when I told him I must renounce my charming plan, but said he understood. I asked him to return with us to England, but he shook his head; he could not afford to live in London, to live anywhere but in Pont Aven. I fancied he was in debt to the hotel, but dared not offer to lend him money; I knew he had repulsed Vachell, who would have been glad to pay his debts.

So I bade him a reluctant farewell, and he stood watching the diligence as we drove off.

He had promised to write to me, but answered none of my letters. About three weeks after our return I heard from Mrs. Trulow. 'Your poet,' she wrote, 'has been drunk ever since you left, and no longer sports his collar and cuffs. Too bad your influence was not more lasting.'

But when I reproached myself, Aleece merely scoffed, 'No woman ever yet reformed a drunkard,' she said. 'Sometimes he reforms himself if his innards go back on him and he gets frightened. If you'd buried yourself in that God-forsaken place all winter, it would have been the same story when you did leave.' And no doubt she was right.

Again I heard from Mrs. Trulow. 'Your poet left to-day to pay a farewell visit to Aubrey Beardsley, who is said to be dying. His only luggage was an extra sweater, which he carried under his arm. He may have had a toothbrush in his pocket, but I doubt it.'

I never heard from him, and only saw him once again. It was at a Mass for the repose of Aubrey Beardsley's soul, some two years later. I had fallen into the habit of going to the Farm Street Church every Sunday to listen to the music, which was the finest of its kind in London. When the priest read out an announcement that on a certain morning there would be a Requiem Mass for the repose of the soul of Aubrey Beardsley, I determined to attend, partly as a tribute to a great artist, more, perhaps, for the sake of the music.

It was a curious assemblage. All the women were fashionable, all the men looked epicene. The Mass was very impressive, and I sat for a few moments after it was over idly watching the people as they moved slowly down the aisle. And then I saw Ernest Dowson. He looked more like a lost soul than ever as he drifted past with his unseeing eyes. And very shabby, very poor. I half rose to follow him, but sank

back with a mental headshake. He was a sensitive creature and could have no wish to meet again one who had known him during a brief period of regeneration. He died – miserably, of course – two years later.

## X

SOME time after our return from Pont Aven, Mr. Whiteing took us one night to a reception at Stafford House. The Duchess of Sutherland and her sister, the Countess of Warwick, were two of the celebrated ‘beauties’; the former had literary aspirations, the latter more interesting to the public as the personal friend of the Prince of Wales. It needed little effort to persuade the Duchess to throw open Stafford House to literary and journalistic London, and she made the affair more brilliant by inviting many of her own world, who graced the occasion in Paris gowns and diamond tiaras. Princess Henry of Pless, the daughter of Mrs. Cornwallis-West – Mrs. Langtry’s sole rival in the day when the term Professional Beauty was invented – looked like a fairy princess under her sparkling crown. Lady Curzon – Mary Victoria Leiter of Chicago – dark and pale and tragic, was perhaps the most beautiful of the many beauties present.

I doubt if so many celebrities, literary, editorial, journalistic, fashionable, political, were ever before gathered under one roof. To enumerate them all would take several chapters, but Lord Rosebery was one of the most notable. He had achieved his three ambitions: to marry the richest heiress living, win the Derby, and be Prime Minister of England; he had also held as many important positions as any man of his time, and was the author of several admirable works. But he wandered about alone, his still boyish face sad and distraught, as if life were a failure after all, or he had exhausted its possibilities too soon.

Lord Salisbury, bearded and pouchy, stood in a corner of the great hall with the eagle-faced Moberly Bell, manager of *The Times*, who looked as if he were pointing out various literary stars rather than discussing affairs of state.

I was sitting with T. P. O'Connor when Hardy drifted by, looking as little interested in his surroundings as usual. In his wake was an excessively plain, dowdy, high-stomached woman with her hair drawn back in a tight little knot, and a severe cast of countenance. 'Mrs. Hardy,' said T. P. 'Now you may understand the pessimistic nature of the poor devil's work.'

No doubt Hardy went out so constantly to be rid of her! It was not easy to think of any other reason, for he certainly never had the air of enjoying himself. One would see him at literary gatherings of every sort, some in rooms so small and crowded that it was quite impossible to move, and the chatter deafening. He never spoke unless addressed, and then as if his thoughts were far away. For my part I had avoided him after our second meeting, at Mrs. Caird's. He was anything but great in personality.

## XI

It was spring again. Alece had returned to California. A London winter is very trying; I was feeling rather run down and longed for the brighter skies and more bracing air of the country. The Corkrans sent me to a friend of theirs, Miss Bogle, who, to accommodate her brother, a pupil at the Herkomer Art School, had bought a house in Bushey, Hertfordshire, and occasionally took in a paying guest. It was a rambling pretty house with a large high-walled garden at the back full of trees and old-fashioned flowers. Miss Bogle was a clever active little Scotswoman, who knew how to run a house and make her guests comfortable; it was early

spring when I arrived, and very cold, but I always had a fire in my room. I lived with her off and on for several years. She didn't approve of my books, but personally we got on very well.

Hertfordshire, more familiarly known as Herts, has always typified England to me, more so than any part I visited. Its wide lonely commons, or heaths, its quiet woods and fields, slumbrous villages, some of them historic, slender grey spires against a red sunset, all seemed to me more Wordsworthian than even the Lake country. Hatfield House, the ancestral home of the Cecils, was a stately brown pile not far from the common.

I loved to ramble about that high-walled garden in the twilight, watching the night moths flit among the hollyhocks, listening to the silence. I had walked on lonely moors at the end of the day, the turf springing under my feet, not a sound, not a soul abroad but myself; but nowhere else had I ever realized the peace of England at the twilight hour as I did on those long summer evenings among the hollyhocks, the flitting white moths, the intense silences of Hertfordshire.

Herkomer, born a Bavarian, had become a British subject, then reverted to his former nationality in order to marry his deceased wife's sister, but continued to live and prosper in England. Pupils came from all over the world to attend his art school, and the mansion he had built for himself was an imposing pile of grey stone, representing some period, but with an immense copper door!

Miss Bogle took me there to tea several times, but I never could make anything of Herkomer. He sat with us, leaning his head on his hand as if afflicted with chronic headache, and rarely spoke. A curious looking man with a bluish pallor that reminded me of a character in one of Wilkie Collins's novels, who took nitrate of silver for epilepsy and frightened the children in the streets. His fame does not

seem to have been lasting, but at that time he was hung on the line at every Academy, and ranked with the best. He had a number of American pupils, and two of them while I was in Bushey were James Montgomery Flagg and his friend, Frank Richmond Kimbrough. They often came to Miss Bogle's for tea.

## X I I

*Patience* was out at last. It would have been wiser perhaps to have been in London for the event, but not only was that damp grey city unendurable for the moment, but I was full of a new book – *The Californians* – and come to birth it must.

The English reviews of *Patience* were all I could have wished. Mr. Courtney wrote in the *Daily Telegraph*: 'The book is one of rare promise and power. Mrs. Atherton knows her subject thoroughly. A novel to be read, or perhaps a document to be studied; a brilliant, analytic inquiry into the baffling and scintillating paradoxes of American character.' He devoted a column to the book, and although he reproved me for 'stippling' and too much analysis, he gave me high praise for the most part.

A critic in the *Academy* wrote: 'The author's perceptions are acute and her reflections extraordinarily well phrased. *Patience* is taken charge of by two maiden ladies whose evangelical activities George Eliot could scarce have depicted with a finer art.' In the *Westminster Gazette*: 'The book has very high merits. The characters are all firmly conceived and firmly drawn. This novel may be strongly recommended to people who take an interest in the United States; and we congratulate Gertrude Atherton on her picture of that country.' And so on. But the review I prized most highly was in the *Manchester Guardian*: 'The impressions that she conveys are undeniably strong, consistent, homogeneous. The story is, from first to last, singularly interesting.

The heroine, in her intense individuality, is the realization of a type, the incarnation of the spirit of independence in a womanly temperament, a figure that will cling to the memory and modify the readers' world. To find anything so convincing as the early girlhood of Patience Sparhawk we are obliged to recall *Jane Eyre*, or (perhaps a closer parallel) Stendahl's posthumous *Lamiel*. It has several of the greater virtues of a fine style; it is plastic, rhythmical, full of marrow, abounding in picturesque expressions and just attributes. This is altogether a novel to admire.'

I don't think it had one favourable review in the United States. There was no vulgar abuse, save in one of the Chicago papers, for the tone of the Press had improved, but even the older and more dignified critics seemed to be both amazed and annoyed that I had dared to persist in the face of universal disapproval, and had managed to get my latest offence published by a leading house in England. Moreover, there was much in the book to irritate Americans, at that time morbidly sensitive to criticism. I had attacked, or held up to ridicule, many of the prejudices they held most sacred. And the spirit of feminine revolt alarmed them. It was to be hoped that the estimable young women of America would see nothing in the reprehensible Patience Sparhawk save a solemn warning.

Nevertheless, the book had a slow but steady sale in the United States – for something like twenty years; and later critics admitted – with manifest reluctance – that its influence was indisputable.

It had an immediate success in England, and I received personal letters from several of the critics – none of whom I had met – and from many of the friends I had made. The latter begged me to return to London and 'be entertained.' But I was full of my new book; moreover, more than content with the realization of my hopes. The Personality part could wait.

### XIII

SIR WALTER BESANT, almost as soon as *Patience* was published, wrote inviting me to become a member of the Society of Authors he had founded; and, a month or two later, wrote again asking if I would call upon him at once. The note was rather agitated, and, much mystified, I took a train for London next day and went out to his house in Hampstead.

I was shown into the library, where the temperature must have been 110°, and Sir Walter sat cowering over a blazing fire, his head tied up in a white shawl. He had a cold, poor man, but was hardly an impressive figure.

He received me with great cordiality, then looked at me anxiously. 'Have you seen a copy of *Author*, the monthly bulletin of the Society?' he asked. 'It is sent to all members.'

I replied that I had not. He handed me the magazine, and asked me with a sigh to read the letter from the New York correspondent, a man named Hapgood. One paragraph read somewhat as follows: 'I should like to remind your readers that Gertrude Atherton is not taken as seriously in the United States as she seems to be in England. We have been very much amused at the eulogies of the British Press of her latest and most futile attempt to depict American life.' And more to the same effect.

'Pure unadulterated spite!' I exclaimed in wrath. 'They are furious because real critics have praised me, and no one knows over here that an American critic exists.'

Sir Walter nodded vigorously. 'It looks like it,' he said. 'But I have been very much distressed, for I regard members of the Society as being under my personal protection; and while just criticism is always welcome, a deliberate attempt to injure a young author is quite another matter. I should have deleted that paragraph if I had read the proofs, as is



my habit, but illness prevented. I asked you to come here to-day to receive my explanation and apology.'

I told him that I throve on the disapproval of American critics, and that if they faced about and accepted me I should feel I had gone off and was too innocuous to provoke their malice. We then dropped the subject, and after a pleasant hour I departed with the agreeable assurance that I had made another friend. A new correspondent appeared in *Author*.

## X I V

WHEN *The Californians* – a much shorter novel than *Patience* – was finished I returned to London, and lived for some time in what was euphemistically known as a Private Hotel but was nothing more than a glorified West End boarding-house. It was very well run, however, and there was a large drawing-room at the disposal of the guests.

The season was not yet over and immediately I began to have quite a gay time. A great friend of Alejandra's, Mrs. Kinahan, was living in London; she had been Mrs. Sillem in San Francisco, but her first husband had died and she was now married to an elderly admiral, retired. In California, knowing me first when I was very young, she had made something of a pet of me, and had helped Alex to cover the elaborate cradle for my first baby. She had taken little notice of me in London, however, until 'everybody' was reading *Patience Sparhawk*, and then I became the stellar attraction of her Thursdays, when I was not at the Corkrans'. At her house in Mayfair I met fashionable London for the first time. You are passed on very quickly from one hostess to another in London – all one needs is a start – and I was enjoying the sensation of being a lion when once more there was an abrupt change in my programme.

One day Dr. Robertson Nicoll called, and asked me to

give my new book to a young firm of publishers, Service & Paton, in which he was interested. I told him *The Californians* was in the hands of John Lane and I had signed the contract. 'Then write another,' he said briskly. 'I want my young men to have one of your books. They will pay you a handsome advance, and . . .' he looked at me meaningly, 'I think it is time you had a boom. Favourable criticisms are all very well, but they are soon forgotten, and although your book is popular in London I doubt if it gets much further, for Lane is certainly not exerting himself to push it. You should be read all over Great Britain.'

This was a pretty broad hint. I had always wanted a 'boom.' There was something exciting about it, and I had envied other authors, who, it seemed to me, were always having booms. Moreover, I was annoyed with John Lane for some reason now forgotten, and not averse from teaching him a lesson. But, alas, I had no idea for another book in my now frivolous head, and, with deep regret, I communicated the unhappy fact to this valuable and interested friend. It was one of those 'psychological moments' one was always hearing of and I could not take advantage of it!

Dr. Nicoll was not impressed. 'That means exactly nothing,' he said impatiently. 'Sit down at your desk and a story will come to you. Unless I am much mistaken – and I have been studying writers of fiction for a good many years – you have astonishing fertility. Now, put on your hat and come with me to call on Service & Paton. Of course they will call on you if you insist, but I'd like you to meet them first in their offices.'

Curiosity devouring me as usual, I allowed myself to be persuaded, and accompanied Dr. Nicoll to the publishing district, where, in handsome offices, I met two very agreeable young men. There I was hypnotized into signing a contract – for an 'international novel' – and a cheque was pressed into my hand. It was not the custom to make the

advance payment on a book until the day of publication, but these charming and smiling young publishers were deaf to my protests.

'They are very trusting,' I said to my new mentor as we left the building. 'Suppose I bolted with this cheque, or put them off indefinitely? They want the book in four months, and my mind is a blank.'

'They are not fools,' he said drily. 'And they know that having accepted the cheque you will feel doubly committed.'

'It will hang over my head like a thunder cloud,' I grumbled. 'I'll not spend a cent of it until that book is finished – if it ever is! If it isn't I'll return their money.'

## X V

THERE was nothing for it! That book must be written. I had not only given my word, but pride was ever a besetting sin. Failure would be demoralizing.

I pulled up stakes and went to Rouen; it was my intention to write every book in a new place, combining travel with work. I had several historic and beautiful cities in mind for this purpose.

At the hotel in Rouen I asked the *caissière* if she knew of any place outside the city where I could board; I expected to spend many hours exploring the town, but I also liked country walks. She told me of a Madame d'Oliviera who had a house in the Bois Guillaume, on a hill on the outskirts, and I set forth.

The house was on the crest of a hill, but if there had ever been a *bois* it had disappeared long since. A square house badly in need of paint stood back in a large unkempt yard that was surrounded by a low hedge in which was inserted a formidable-looking gate. I rang the bell and in a moment a tall, thin woman dressed in the shabbiest of black, with a black worsted scarf about her head, an im-

mense key in her hand, crossed the yard, and, after looking at me sharply through the bars, unlocked the gate.

'You are an American, no?' she asked. 'Have you lost you way? Would you like to come in and rest a moment?'

I followed her across the yard; she walked with a slight stoop, her head bent forward as if striving to overtake her thoughts. Her dark face looked as if Time had castigated her mercilessly, but her voice was cultivated, and she had, despite all, an air of what used to be called elegance. I learned afterward that her mother had been a great lady in England, the wife of a 'lord of the manor' named Maundrell, and, after raising an English family and losing her husband, she had married a Portuguese nobleman, lived in France, and died some years later leaving four little girls. They had been brought up by their father and married off in due course. Madame d'Oliviera's husband had proved to be a scoundrel and she had been thrown on the world to support herself as best she could; her father had died as well as two of her sisters; her elder half-brother, Mr. Maundrell, had lost his fortune. She had managed to eke out an existence by taking boarders, and had finally achieved a certain reputation with a number of young Englishmen, who came to her every year during the autumn.

She told me something of this as we sat in the ugly parlour, and expressed her regret at not being able to take me in; she had promised her young Englishmen never to admit a woman to what they had come to consider their especial preserve. I pointed out that it would be at least two months before they were due, and meanwhile I could get in a lot of work; I could move out later, but wanted to waste no time at present. I had some difficulty in persuading her, for it was evident that aside from her promise she was unaccustomed to women in her house and doubtful of the experiment. But she finally consented on condition I would agree to move out on a moment's notice.

There was not a carpet in the house; it was bare and cold and scantily furnished, but kept scrupulously clean by Madame d'Oliviera and a crippled old servant named Célestine, who had caught the grand air from her mistress and had really exquisite manners, even when backing into my room of a morning with the bath tub. The only other member of the household was a half-sister, too old and too heavy to do anything but knit.

It was a sad household. They were very poor, and I wondered how they existed during the greater part of the year. It was evident they had trained their interior economy to do with the minimum of food, and had so lost the sense of its importance that I should have been divested of what little flesh I had if I had not patronized a restaurant at least once a day during my wanderings about the city. But Madame d'Oliviera had so much charm and vivacity and proved so entertaining with her reminiscences that I was well content. I was used to anything by this time.

One day she told me a strange story. It was during the winter two years before that her clientele made a sudden descent upon her. They arrived looking white and desperate, demanded to be taken in, and for several weeks they never showed themselves outside the house in the daytime, taking their exercise in the yard at night. The only exception was when the postman rang the gate bell; one of them would then run out, snatch the letters and English newspapers, dash back again and shut himself up in the parlour with the others; there she would hear the excited buzz of their voices for hours. At table while Célestine was in the room they did not speak at all.

Of course Madame d'Oliviera's curiosity was aroused! She watched her chance, and one night when they were all in the yard, abstracted one of the London newspapers. It was an early issue and contained the day's account of the trial of Oscar Wilde.

'Then, of course, I knew!' she said triumphantly. 'They were afraid of being called as witnesses, for they were all his intimate friends – disciples, I had heard them call themselves. They had run away the very night he was arrested.' And there they had remained until the trial was over.

## XVI

BUT I was too worried to talk with her during the first week of my stay. Not an idea for that confounded book would come. I tried the experiment that had proved so fruitful at Bolton Abbey. No use. I walked about Rouen until I was ready to drop, too nervous to sit still. Then inspiration came in a singular manner.

'You must visit Bonsecours,' said Madame d'Oliviera one day. 'It's on a hill on the right bank of the Seine and the view is superb. The church is not old but it is beautifully decorated and there's a monument to Jeanne d'Arc. You'll enjoy the boat ride on the river, too, and there is a restaurant where you can get your lunch.'

It was a famous pilgrim resort; I thought I might as well visit it that day as later, and went upstairs to put on my hat. She walked out to the gate with me; it was always kept locked, although even I could have taken the hedge at one leap; and as I was leaving she said earnestly: 'Now mind you make a prayer up there for what you want most in the world. The first prayer at that shrine is always granted.'

'Prayer!' I laughed. 'I've not said my prayers since I was a child. I had enough of prayers then.'

She was a good Catholic and shook her head reprovingly. 'Very naughty of you. But if you are wise you will take my advice. Always, *always* the first prayer is granted.'

It was a balmy day and I did enjoy the ride up the Seine,

depressed as were my spirits. I enjoyed less the toilsome climb up the hill, but the view was all the guide-books claimed for it. I was not particularly interested in views, however, and was glad to find the place deserted. I eyed the open shrine speculatively . . . and wondered . . . Was it worth while? . . . Why not? By this time I was desperate and ready to try anything. I looked about to make sure there was no one approaching and then plumped down on my knees.

My address to the Almighty was somewhat unorthodox.

'Look here,' I said. 'You have given me a spark out of your great body of Creative Force (recalling Herbert Spencer) and it is your duty to help me out of a hole. I must write that book! I must! I must!' I became a trifle more humble. 'Please. Please.'

When I told Madame d'Oliviera what I had asked for she exclaimed in dismay: 'Oh, why didn't you pray for a nice handsome husband?'

'Husband!' I cried. 'Husband! What is a husband to a book? I want nothing else in life just now.' But she was far too French to understand.

The next morning I sat down at my writing table, determined that as I had gone so far I would assume my prayer must be granted. But my fiction tract was as barren as the Arctic Circle. And so it was on the next day and the next. I was in a state of profound disgust, and told Madame d'Oliviera what I thought of her and of superstition in general.

And then, on the fourth day, I walked almost automatically to my table and began to write. The story flowed forth in an unceasing torrent. I never knew what was coming next, hardly as if it came out of my own consciousness – rather as if it were conceived somewhere out in the ether and was using my passive brain as a medium. And there was never a hiatus; the source never ran dry for a

moment; in six weeks the book was finished. As a rule I write every book three times, but this was as perfect as I could make it in one, and I made scarcely a verbal correction.

Self-hypnotism? Suggestion? The subconscious jarred into action? Who knows anything of the psycho-mental processes? Catholics to whom I have told the story insist that it was a direct answer to prayer. Perhaps it was. What do we know about anything? Nothing.

## XVII

I HAD been at work for about three weeks when I suddenly found myself with a companion nearer my own age. Madame d'Oliviera came to me in a state of manifest perturbation one morning shortly after the arrival of the postman.

'Oh, Madame! Madame!' she exclaimed. 'How shall I say it? Something so unexpected has happened. I must ask you to leave. . . .'

'What!' I interrupted her. 'Leave? I won't leave! I shan't stir until I've finished my book.'

She wrung her hands in despair, and it was evident she was very much upset; not only had she grown quite fond of me but was persuaded the Virgin or one of the saints was writing that book. 'You know what I told you, dear Madame. If my young men came. . . .'

'But it is too soon for them. . . .'

'I hoped so, but one has just written that he is not very well and is coming to-morrow. If he finds you here, he'll leave at once and never come again. I'm afraid the others wouldn't either!'

It was impossible not to pity her; she looked so distracted, and I knew she could not afford to lose those Englishmen who had been faithful to her for a number of years. She was



too far out of town for the unattached men of Rouen, unless they were humble clerks, and these she scorned. Her Englishmen were all gentlemen, although some of them were forced to economize in their yearly outings; the others came to be with them.

‘I’ll tell you what to do,’ I said. ‘He won’t mind if he thinks I’m only here for a day or two. Tell him I’m looking round for another place. Leave the rest to me. I’ve never met the man yet I couldn’t get along with – if I chose.’

And at that it was left, but she went away shaking her head.

I met him next night at the dinner table. He greeted me with a scowl on his gnome-like face, but thawed somewhat before the meal was over. His was a gregarious soul and he liked to talk. We had acquaintances and literary ideals in common, and exchanged opinions in the parlour until ten o’clock. Needless to say he also talked about himself and that I encouraged him. He had a small income which relieved him of the necessity of work, and he loved art, literature, and travel. Many of his friends were blinding lights in the literary world, and although he had no talent of his own, he had much to give in the way of wit, intelligence, and critical appreciation. Before two days had passed we were the best of friends and he informed me graciously that I could remain; glad to have me.

For that matter he was in the house for dinner and the night only. Some time during the morning he emerged from his room, very sprucely dressed, and sauntered off, cane under his arm, to sit in one of the cafés on the quay, lunch in a fashionable restaurant, sit in the cafés again. It was his idea of an interesting Continental vacation.

We spent every evening together, and he had a great deal to say of Oscar Wilde. He had sat at his feet, worshipping him, listening to such talk as never before since the

fifth century B.C. had flowed from any man's lips, enchanted at being one of his circle, clay in his hands.

'But I now regret bitterly that I ever knew him,' he said to me in a burst of confidence one day. 'He was an evil influence for any young man, and distorted one's outlook upon life. I'll never see him again. Never! He's coming out of prison in a day or two, and several of his friends will meet him and bring him over to Dieppe. But not I! I'm trying to live now as if I had never known him. He and the others may think I'm heartless. I don't care.'

And then, less than a week later, he was very glum at dinner, and when we were alone in the parlour told me he had received a letter from Wilde. 'He's coming to Rouen to-morrow!' he exclaimed, looking as if about to cry. 'He wants me to meet him at a certain restaurant. He says he must talk to me, and as I won't go to him. . . .'

'Well, you won't meet him, I hope,' I said as his voice trailed off. 'You'd be an idiot if you did.'

'I must!' he wailed. 'If I don't he'll come out here. And his letter is full of reproaches, and very pitiful. It's a horrible fix to be in. How I wish I had never met him!'

'If you must go, then get rid of him once for all. If you have any character now is the time to show it. Tell him you are leading a different life and he must let you alone in the future.'

'Character!' He sighed deeply. 'You don't know Oscar.'

He went off next morning, dragging his feet, all the jauntiness gone out of him.

I was in the parlour when he returned. His face looked three inches longer. He fell into a chair, leaned his elbows on the table, and clutched his hair with both hands.

'I'm done for,' he moaned. 'Oscar wouldn't listen to me. He says it is my duty to stand by him, that he must have companionship or go mad. The others are too busy . . . I have the leisure to devote myself to him . . . He has

been through hell. He reminded me of all he had done for me in the past. . . .’

‘But I thought the man had a large nature despite the rest of him,’ I interrupted. ‘Didn’t you tell him you wanted to break with the past? That it would be your social ruin to associate yourself with him again?’

‘He has suffered too much to think of anything else. Oh, yes, I told him everything I could think of. I even told him I didn’t want to leave you. . . .’

‘Confound you!’ I cried in wrath. ‘A nice thing to tell him! What will he think?’ And then I looked at that gnome-like little face and laughed. ‘Well, what did he say to that?’

‘He said: “Oh, Mrs. Atherton! She is young and has all life before her. While I – I am a soul in purgatory”!’

‘Very touching. But you are even younger, and I see no reason why you should wreck your life for the sake of an old sinner like that.’ I looked at him sharply. ‘Answer this question honestly, do you really want to go back to Oscar Wilde?’

‘No!’ he exclaimed violently. ‘A thousand times no! I wish to God I could get out of it. But I don’t see . . . He says he’ll stay here in Rouen until I promise to go back to Dieppe with him.’

‘Then there’s but one thing for you to do. Pack your bags and leave for England by the first boat to-morrow. Write him a note which he will receive when you are out of his reach, telling him that you had a telegram recalling you to London at once. Leave the rest to time.’

He looked up hopefully. ‘I might do that . . . he certainly couldn’t follow me to England! But – but – it does seem like an act of desertion. He made me feel. . . .’

I argued with him for an hour longer. He veered back and forth. But the upshot was that he ran away, and, as far as I know, did not see Wilde again until that dethroned of Language had fallen into such depths of poverty

and illness that all his old friends rallied about him once more and eased him into another world.

## XVIII

I CALLED the book *American Wives and English Husbands*. It was to come out early in the spring, and I returned to England. There was a winter season in London, much quieter than what the Continentals call the High Season, but, in a way, far more satisfactory; one had time to see one's friends, hear a sentence finished occasionally, and dive below the top layer of formality. All who had country houses occupied them, of course, unless they went to Southern Europe, but many had not, spent the greater part of the winter season in London, and did a good deal of entertaining. Not anywhere is there a greater contrast between the inside and the outside of a city than in London during the winter. Gaiety, warmth, luxury, hospitality within; dun skies, yellow fogs, penetrating damp, sodden streets without. During the Season one may decline many invitations, during the winter never.

So far, I did not know a great many people, and spent that winter rather quietly – in that same private hotel – correcting the proofs of *American Wives and English Husbands* and of *The Californians*, which John Lane would bring out when he felt like it. The former was to be published in the United States by Dodd, Mead & Company; the title was changed later to *Transplanted*, for the American public had shied away from what they assumed to be a book of essays!

Mr. Fry gave me a tea in the offices of *Vanity Fair*, and there I met Lady Colin Campbell, one of the most striking and interesting figures in London, although quite *déclassée*. Another tragic figure. Still, I fancied she got a good deal

more out of life than the others I have mentioned, for nature had been kinder to her.

She was one of the most beautiful women I have ever seen, quite six feet tall but perfectly made, poised, and balanced; she reminded one of a spirited clean-limbed race-horse. Her eyes and hair were black, her skin of a luminous ivory hue; she had no colour save in her lips, and used no make-up. Unexpectedly, she had a great deal of animation, and a keen, satiric, brilliant mind.

The story goes that she and her sister were educated in a convent, and then launched on the world, as innocent as blind puppies. One has heard and read a great deal about the ruthless match-making mothers of England, and they must have reached their apotheosis in Mrs. Blood. Well-born but comparatively poor, she was alert to sell her beautiful daughters to the highest bidder. They were admirable foils; one was fair and sweet, the other dark and dashing. The blonde was bid in almost at once, and Mrs. Blood picked out Lord Colin Campbell for Vera. He was notoriously dissipated, but any son of the Duke of Argyll was a catch. Although manifestly attracted, he was wary and in no haste to marry.

Mrs. Blood took a house near his hunting lodge in Scotland, was invited with her beautiful daughter to the neighbourhood parties, and finally stalked him down. When the Duke heard of the engagement he called on Mrs. Blood and did his best to dissuade her. 'My son is no man for a decent girl to marry,' he said with true British candour. 'I spend my nights pulling him out of the maid-servants' beds, and he is steeped in vice of every kind.'

It is charitable to believe that Mrs. Blood assumed he wanted a wealthy bride for Lord Colin and would go to any length to put her off. At all events she paid no heed to his warning. She had set what passed for her heart on a title, an alliance with a great family, and she had met no

one else who filled the requirements. And she was far too worldly to take personal happiness into account. How many women in the British aristocracy were happy? And who had so many compensations?

As young Campbell was handsome and attractive, Vera, to whom the duke's warning was not repeated, was as eager for the match as her mother. It came off. For a time Lady Colin was one of the reigning beauties of London, invited everywhere, courted, flattered. Men went down before her like grain before the reaper, and as she was soon disillusioned in regard to her worthless husband, she amused herself recklessly. Like Oscar Wilde, she thought that, having allied herself with the innermost circles of the British aristocracy, she could do anything she chose and suffer no consequences.

But she had reckoned without Colin Campbell.

It is quite true that a woman of established position in England may have as many lovers as she choose provided they are of her own circle and she keep out of the divorce courts, but if she manage her affairs so tactlessly as to extend her reputation beyond the sacrosanct preserve she might as well be a soul damned in hell.

Lord Colin brought suit against his wife, naming six co-respondents. On the advice of her lawyer, she immediately brought a counter-suit. Every suburban breakfast table gloated over details that were not at all nice. Five of the co-respondents, one of whom was the then Duke of Marlborough, lied like gentlemen, but a distinguished general, when put on the stand, refused either to affirm or deny; he possessed a cherry-tree conscience.

This was a frightful blow for the defence; nevertheless Lord Colin lost his suit. Mr. Fry, who was foreman of the jury, told me that the other members were all of the small tradesman class, and, while they could understand a woman of high degree having a lover through passion or greed,

they refused to believe that a noblewoman could be promiscuous. That alone saved her, for although it was suspected that many of the servants called as witnesses were lying, it was impossible for the defending counsel to break down their testimony.

So, Lady Colin won, and her own suit as well, but she was a social outcast. She had committed the cardinal sin: she had permitted herself to be found out. And she had brought discredit on her Order.

And then she did a clever thing. Instead of retiring into continental obscurity, or becoming a brazen courtesan as a stupider woman would have done, she walked straight into the journalistic world and made a name for herself as an art critic. She found no ostracism there; they were used to all sorts, and few could resist her personal fascination. When I met her her position in journalism was assured, as well as in some of the literary circles. Nothing of 'the woman with a past' about *her*.

A few of her old friends stood by her, notably Lady Warwick, the Duchess of Sutherland, and Alice Meynell; but if they had the courage to invite her to their houses she never went. London Society might be proud, but she was prouder. It is doubtful if from the day of her social downfall she ever placed herself in a position to be snubbed.

## XIX

WE were mutually attracted, and I saw her constantly. She had a handsome apartment in a short and fashionable street running off Victoria Street, where she lived in the luxury which was inseparably a part of her. I met few women there, but many handsome and distinguished men! Mrs. Kinahan and other ladies of impeccable virtue remonstrated with me, but I replied that I was an American, a writer, a rank outsider, and could know whom I chose. To

be interested was one of the most important things in life. And certainly my friendship with Lady Colin did me no harm; or if it did I never was aware of the fact, so what matter?

But you cannot know an Englishwoman\* intimately – nor casually, for that matter – without being staggered occasionally. One afternoon I went to see Lady Colin unexpectedly. The maid showed me into the long drawing-room. At the far end, on the left, I could see Lady Colin seated in the corner of a sofa. She neither rose to meet me, nor did she speak. Her manner as I approached was nothing short of frozen. She was beautifully posed and gowned, and looked as if about to sit to a famous painter as Cleopatra, Poppæa Sabina, or some other of that ilk. By this time I called her Vera and she called me G, but if I had been a total stranger who had intruded upon her royal privacy I could not have been treated with more inarticulate resentment. The few words she uttered were glacial.

I knew she was a woman of many moods, but this was going rather far. I was wondering what I had done to offend her royal highness when I had a flash of understanding. She was expecting some man and I had been shown in by mistake! She had dressed herself (in yellow), posed herself, put on the correct expression (before her mirror, no doubt), assembled her subtlest faculties, all for conquest, and here was a damnably disturbing element.

It was a laughable but uncomfortable situation, and I was about to rise, tell her I was sorry she was not feeling well, and would come again when she felt better, when I heard a footfall on the rugs behind me; her expression changed as if a sponge had passed over her face, and I knew the man had come.

And the man was Henry James.

\* Lady Colin was Irish by birth but entirely English by training and long association.



He was very good-looking at that time, and always turned out by Savile Row. She dropped her broad white eyelids over smouldering eyes, extended a languid hand; her voice was soft and alluring. His was rather brisk, and he might have been seeing Cleopatras every day in the week. He gave me, too, a pleasant greeting, and then seated himself and began to talk.

Impossible for me to go at once as I had not risen before he entered; to have made a precipitate retreat would have made fools of all three of us. So I remained for perhaps a quarter of an hour longer and had the pleasure of hearing Henry James talk; Vera did not open her mouth.

A great deal has been told and written of Henry James's circumambulatory speech, of his long and vermicular sentences, his 'ers' and 'ahs,' and I had had one experience of it myself. But there were times when he could be as clear and direct and coherent as Edmund Gosse or any other noted conversationalist, and to-day was one of them. In fact he talked as if every sentence had been carefully rehearsed; every semi-colon, every comma, was in exactly the right place, and his rounded periods dropped to the floor and bounced about like tiny rubber balls. He talked about Whistler, I remember, and said he hoped to outlive that great and unique artist that he might pay him the highest tribute of which his pen was capable. I have often wondered if he did.

When the subject of Whistler was exhausted, I made as graceful an exit as I could command.

What they talked about after I left was beyond my powers of imagining. Vera had oriented herself to the role of the siren, but I couldn't see Henry James making love to any woman. Still, no doubt he knew the technique and played up to her. One has to play many roles when one is a popular member of the social order, and if there were no other recourse he could take refuge in airy persiflage.

When I met her a day or two later she was as charming and vivacious as ever; my unfortunate intrusion was ignored by us both. No doubt the maid who admitted me was sacked.

Lady Colin was a great sufferer from rheumatism; when I met her she had just returned from being boiled out at Salsamaggiore; in those days they knew nothing of the poison in tonsils and teeth, and medicated baths were the only recourse. Her hands, although the skin was still fine and white, were somewhat distorted. There is a painting by Burne-Jones in which the hands remain but a sketch. Lady Colin's were to have been their model, but after her first serious attack of rheumatism they were no longer objects to rouse the enthusiasm of an artist, and Burne-Jones vowed that as no one else in the world had such beautiful hands as hers had been he would leave his picture unfinished. He died before he could change his mind.

Poor Lady Colin! Misfortune pursued her. She had managed with great difficulty to get her own private fortune of ten thousand pounds out of Lord Colin's hands, and, small as the income was, it gave her a pleasant feeling of security. But her brother, Colonel Blood, persuaded her to invest it in some enterprise of his own and it was lost. Her attacks of rheumatism, as the years passed, grew more and more severe, and finally culminated in arthritis. Ten years after I first met her she was paralysed from the neck down, and suffered incessantly. Every day she was wheeled into the drawing-room and seated before a table, where she received her friends. I had been away from England for several years, and although I knew she had been ill, I was indescribably shocked when I saw her. Her once brilliant black eyes were faded and dim and the iris had run into the cornea; she had grown stout, her hair was white, and she wore a lace cap! True, as she lived on milk, she had the pink and white complexion of an infant, but even that

was unnatural to my horrified eyes. And she could not have been a day over forty-five, if that.

She told me she had not looked into a mirror for four years. I wondered if she ever glanced in passing at the superb portrait by Boldini that hung at the end of the drawing-room; it had been painted shortly after my acquaintance with her began and when she was one of the handsomest women in the world.

Perhaps. The changes were as staggering in her character, her personality. She had acquired a noble serenity; grown resigned and philosophical. What was was. In all ways she was so unlike the haughty, caustic, spirited, brilliant creature I had known that I found it impossible to pick up the broken threads of our old friendship, feel any sense of intimacy with this unfortunate being of whom nothing I had known was left but her name. All I could do was to call on her occasionally, bring her sweet peas – her favourite flower, oddly enough – regale her with what interesting gossip I had, and force an animation I was far from feeling.

She still lived in her former state, and I fancy Lady Warwick and the Duchess of Sutherland supported her. I rarely saw her alone. As I have said, the English can be very faithful, and she had a procession of callers all day long.

One day I happened to mention Avery Hopwood, then at the beginning of his career, and in London at the moment. When I told her how gay and amusing he was she asked me if I thought he would come to see her. I wondered, for he was much sought after, and men are selfish. But he was interested in what I told him of her history and called the next day, and several times after. She said he not only amused her more than any man she had met for years, but, with a flash of her old gaiety, that a face cut on the bias was enough to make anyone forget her woes.

Fate was remorseless to the end. Her greatest consolation was the devotion of an intelligent Frenchwoman, formerly

her maid, now her companion and nurse. As Mrs. Meynell said, the attitude of this woman was of one who was engaged in a perpetual act of consecration. She would have no other nurse, not allow even a servant to do anything for her beloved charge. She was ugly and ill-bred and cross-grained, but love is a mighty force and she seemed to have commanded a responsive flame in one who had had the world at her feet and more men in love with her, it was said, than any woman of her time. Vera's eyes were always seeking hers with an almost dog-like affection and gratitude. It seemed to me the culminating tragedy of a tragic life.

But even this was to be taken from her. Vera, always a large woman, was now very heavy. All the lifting and turning in bed were done unassisted by this devoted creature, who was small and thin and half-way through a critical period of life. She developed cancer and died on the operating table. Lady Colin passed into the hands of trained nurses, to whom she was nothing but a case. Mercifully not for long.

## X X

BUT that was far in the future. During the time of my first friendship with her, although she was rarely free from pain, and was worried about the money she had foolishly been persuaded to turn over to her brother – for whom she had no great regard – she enjoyed life in her ironic fashion, and got what she could out of it. She liked her work, the intellectual contacts of her new life, and was far from indifferent to the admiration she excited wherever she went. She was very musical, and still sang, although her voice was no longer what it had been when heard in the most exclusive drawing-rooms in London. Either the poison in her blood or neglect had roughened it.

One thing about her that interested me most was an entire absence of bitterness. No one had more cause to

be an embittered woman than she. Endowed at the dawn of life with every gift that nature could shower upon a girl, gifts that if enabled to use them properly might have made her the most powerful woman in England, she had been blindly sacrificed to the indiscriminating ambitions of a stupid mother, too impatient to wait until a better man than Colin Campbell came along. She told me the details of her life with her husband and they would not bear printing. He was her inferior in every way, but he had got the best of her, and chuckled over her downfall, protected, himself, from social ostracism by his sex and the mighty name of Campbell. Well-born, well-bred, no worse than many women in the Society that treated her as a leper, she had lost all that a proud woman values as her birthright. The men of her own – her former – world, still paid her court, and no doubt made frantic love to her, but none had the courage to marry her. From what I heard, the greatest blow of all was the death of the Duke of Marlborough. He was one of the most brilliantly intellectual men in England and with him she had found a unique companionship. And perhaps he was more sincerely devoted to her than any man that ever came into her life.

And yet I never saw any trace of bitterness, and when I remembered other women who had succumbed under far less pressure I admired her the more fervently. I had made up my mind when I started out in life that no matter what my reverses, disappointments, misfortunes, I would never become embittered, if only because it would distort my mental outlook and have a pernicious effect on my work; but, I doubt if this attitude would have survived the steady pelting of this malignant fate that beset Vera Campbell. She must have had an innate grandeur that one would hardly suspect under that gay ironic exterior. And courage was the keynote of her character.

Mrs. Meynell, although perhaps the properest woman in

London, was one of her intimate friends. But she was not only a poet, she was a woman of serene and exalted character, to whom an old friendship was too sacred a thing to be affected by scandal or public ostracism. Two friends more unlike never existed, and despite the fact that she dressed smartly, she always looked out of place in that rather voluptuous drawing-room. She sat very erect; her spine was the only rigid thing about her; but if she disapproved there was no trace of it in her manner. The only criticism I ever heard her make of Lady Colin was to say that her rheumatism was due to tight lacing. But of course it was not.

Mrs. Meynell, too, was unlike any one else in London. At first meeting one assumed impatiently that she was a mass of affectation, and had to keep a sharp rein on one's facial muscles. She spoke slowly and dreamily, her deep voice rising to ecstasy about nothing, her eyes far away. Often she would pause in the middle of a sentence and stare rapturously into space, her companions forgotten. But one soon got used to her, and came to the conclusion that in her own queer way she was quite natural.

I had met her during my first visit to London, and ran across her several times after my return. Aleece heard of her on all sides and was very anxious to meet her. But I hesitated, knowing there were times when Aleece's risibilities were uncontrollable, and who more likely to provoke them than Mrs. Meynell? Marie Belloc Lowndes had taken us to a literary reception one night at Douglas Sladen's, where a poet appeared with his hair standing out all over his head in tight little braids; a 'lady novelist' wore a Mother Hubbard frock made of crash towelling; they were but two of several absurd figures trying to be original. Aleece lost all control of herself and screamed with hysterical laughter. Her face looked so agonized that Shannon asked me in alarm if she were ill, and I dragged her into the dressing-room and hissed at her to remain there until she could behave herself.

I had no intention that Mrs. Meynell should be insulted through any fault of mine, but Aleece vowed solemnly that she wouldn't even giggle, 'not if she died for it,' and I finally took her to Mrs. Meynell's house in Palace Gate one Sunday afternoon.

It was an untidy noisy house. Mrs. Meynell had five or six children, who ran in and out, their faces none too clean, their drawers hanging down on one side. But nothing ever disturbed Mrs. Meynell; her serenity was unshakable. Herself very neat and trim, she sat erect and declaimed the virtues of a new poet she had discovered, talked in her most ecstatic voice; it rose and fell like the sad sea waves – or a Gregorian chant. Agnes Tobin was there. She had translated the sonnets of Petrarch and was having a vogue in intellectual London; she introduced the name of another poet in whom they were both interested. Mrs. Meynell grew more and more ecstatic, her voice ever more lyrical. The children precipitated themselves upon her, climbed over her, whispered in her ear; the devoted mother was in full flight, and offspring were as if they were not.

I had not dared meet Aleece's eyes, but finally I stole a glance at her. Her face was crimson and swollen, her nose looked like a round, purple knob. I rose hastily, and we made our exit as rapidly as possible.

'Well?' I asked maliciously, as the front door closed behind us. 'Are you satisfied? You have seen Mrs. Meynell at her most Meynellesque, and will have something to tell when you return to California.'

She gave me a look of hate. Her voice was strangled as she gasped, 'You were a fiend to take me to that house. I've got a raging headache from holding in. I've told you more than once how I loathe freaks.'

And that was all the thanks I got.

## XXI

*American Wives and English Husbands* had even better reception than *Patience Sparhawk*. Dr. Robertson Nicoll asserted roundly that I was 'the ablest woman writer of fiction now living.' The *Saturday Review* that America had 'at last produced a first-rate woman novelist in Gertrude Atherton.' I was once more lauded in the *Manchester Guardian*. When *The Californians* came out, the reviews were equally favourable. The *Leeds Mercury* pronounced it 'an oasis in fiction,' and the *Spectator* was benign: 'Her new venture fairly establishes her claims to be considered one of the most vivid and entertaining interpreters of the complex characteristics of American womanhood . . . It would be idle to deny the brilliancy of its portraiture, or the humour and freshness of its dialogue . . . A powerful and original novel.' And the *Sketch*, whose reviews were attracting attention at the time, said that 'in point of sheer power there is not a living woman novelist who comes near her.' (It was then the custom to publish extracts from reviews in the back of succeeding books; otherwise I should not have these to quote, for the originals were lost long since.)

I was now 'made.' Exactly what the promised boom was I have forgotten, but doubtless Dr. Nicoll had frequent eulogies in the *British Weekly* and the *Bookman*, and pulled other strings as well, for I was interviewed, paragraphed, and photographed. What the criticisms were in the United States I never knew, for after the reception of *Patience* I withdrew my subscription from the New York clipping bureau. I could expect no justice there; so why disturb my serenity by reading their diatribes? I should have been interested in constructive criticism, but, as far as I can remember, I never received so much as a hint from an American reviewer by which I could improve my work.



## XXII

I SPENT a busy and interesting season in London and then went to Bushey to rest and correct the proofs of *A Daughter of the Vine*, which Service & Paton were to bring out in the following spring. I had also wangled them into accepting a boys' story I had written during the winter I spent in London with Aleece. It was, no doubt, the worst boys' story ever written. The scene was laid in Old California and covered a period of one month only; if two boys had ever had as many hair-raising adventures as those two did in so short a space of time they would either have been raving maniacs or drivelling idiots. It may be said in passing that it had no success save in Norway.

I was seated at the table in the dining-room correcting the proofs of *The Valiant Runaways*, when I came upon a queried phrase. 'Now, what can that mean?' I asked of no one in particular, although an elderly aunt of Miss Bogle was seated opposite. I read the sentence aloud: 'The bear was switching his mighty tail.'

'Well, my dear,' said the Scot to the Californian. 'I don't think that bears have tails.'

Another illusion shattered.

James Montgomery Flagg designed the cover for this book, and Frank Kimbrough the one for *A Daughter of the Vine*: a charming conception of grapes and vines. Flagg, while in England, also contributed a cartoon of President McKinley to the famous *Vanity Fair* series, of which 'Spy' (Leslie Ward) was the star. That is to say he was asked to draw a cartoon but arrived with an authentic portrait of McKinley. When Mr. Fry remonstrated Flagg replied that he would not insult his President by caricaturing him; oblivious to the fact there was not a statesman in England who would not have felt honoured by a similar 'insult.' Mr. Fry smiled, shrugged, and passed it.

During that summer or autumn at Miss Bogle's another aunt came from Aberdeen to visit her, a woman I found very interesting because she had 'second sight,' and told me of her many and astonishing experiences. Whether they were veritable or mere coincidences I don't venture to say, but she certainly had 'powers,' for a remarkable instance of them occurred while she was in Bushey.

As the house was full, she had a room in a cottage across the field – where they took in no newspaper, by the way – but spent the day at Miss Bogle's. We were all grouped in the hall one morning reading an account of the assassination of the Empress Elizabeth of Austria in the *Telegraph*, when she burst in upon us exclaiming: 'What has happened? I know something has happened! I woke up crying aloud: "The Queen is dead! The Queen is dead!" And in my dream I saw a woman stabbed!'

Had the radio been invented one would have said she was a human receiving station. As it was I inferred she had got a vibration from the humming wires, and even that would have been queer enough.

### XXIII

THAT was the heyday of South Africans in London. They had houses in Park Lane and elsewhere in Mayfair and Belgravia, entertained lavishly, and were received – not everywhere perhaps, but extensively enough to gratify their social ambitions. A new friend of mine, Agnes Peel, a daughter of Lord Peel, who had been Speaker of the House for thirty years, and himself a son of Sir Robert, married the youngest of the South Africans, Sidney Goldmann, and it was at her house I saw the Burne-Jones picture of the lady with the unfinished hands. (I think it was Elaine on her bier, but may be mistaken.)

The Goldmanns had the finest private collection of 'Burne-Joneses' in England, and to show them off more effectively all the walls were painted white, all the hangings of a dull blue-green. I believe that collection is scattered now, for there came a slump in South African fortunes, and it is a great pity; not only could no setting more perfect be devised for Burne-Joneses, but those lofty white and blue-green rooms, with their pictures invoking a romantic past, were the proper background for the tranquil and rather old-fashioned beauty of the chatelaine.

My own friend among the South Africans was Lionel Phillips, who had a house in Grosvenor Square, and was by far the most popular of the South Africans. He was small in stature, but dignified and good-looking, with great vivacity of mind and charm of manner. Both men and women liked him, and it was owing more to his personality than to his wealth that he came out ahead of the other South Africans in the social race. Several of the titled dames who had cast Lady Colin into outer darkness intimated with more or less subtlety (probably less) that he might have the privilege of paying their bills, and he retorted with the same direct indirectness that he feared his wife, of whom he happened to be fond, might object. Doubtless they still cherished hopes, for his popularity was in no wise affected.

He was one of the most intelligent men I ever met and had spent his life in South Africa; yet, when the war broke out between England and the Boer Republics, he assured me it would be over in three months. I remember we were walking in the garden at Bushey one evening when he demonstrated the quick finish of that war to my entire satisfaction, and greatly relieved Miss Bogle's mind at the dinner table. I recall him leaning forward and saying earnestly: 'We don't want to kill anybody. We'll simply march quietly through the Transvaal and take it.'

Others were equally convincing when I returned to Lon-

don shortly after. The only dissenting voice I heard was at the house of Edith Rhodes, a sister of the great Cecil. Colonel Haggard was calling and asserted with equal positiveness that the war would last for three years, and gave his reasons. And of course he proved to be right.

Edith Rhodes was another character, and although the mightiest of the South African millionaires only allowed his sisters a few hundreds a year, she had established herself comfortably in London, and was equally noted for her eccentric personality and magnetic charm. She was short, stout, square – almost as broad as long – her grizzled hair was cut close and parted on one side, and she wore rough tweeds in her drawing-room. The only time I ever saw her ‘dressed up’ she had on a purple velvet coat and skirt trimmed with gold braid.

I was completely fascinated by her at first, for I thought her the most original person I had ever met. Her magnetism seemed to fill the room, and she looked as fearless as a stocky little Amazon about to lead a regiment into battle. What she thought she said, and what she felt she made no attempt to conceal. I was not only greatly attracted to her but cultivated her of set purpose. I cherished a secret romantic passion for Cecil Rhodes and through her I hoped to meet him. But I never did. During the rare occasions when he was in England I was elsewhere.

Meanwhile she was interesting enough, and I was very anxious to ‘get at’ her. She was so unique exteriorly I felt there must be unfathomed depths below. So when she asked me to spend a week-end with her – while I was still in Bushey – I accepted on condition that she have no one else to dinner on Saturday night. During a long evening I’d plumb those depths.

But, alas, there were none to plumb. We sat on either side of the fire and talked until midnight. The top layer of her personality was as showy and fascinating as ever,

and she fairly sprayed magnetism, but there was no layer beneath. She was either a deliberate and quite magnificent bluffer or merely as Nature made her. Sad, how many experiences of that sort one has. But it is generally men who furnish the disappointments, for one expects more of them.

I continued to go to her house, however, for one met some of the most interesting persons in London there. And she was still a magnet, for nothing could alter the fact that she was the sister of Cecil Rhodes.

## XXIV

ELODIE, having discovered after a year of novitiate that her true vocation was marriage, was now living in Oxford where Hilaire was coaching. He had written *The Bad Child's Book of Beasts*, amusingly illustrated by Lord Basil Blackwood, and was having quite a vogue. I spent a week with them, but I never went again. Hilaire suffered from insomnia, and when he was not roaming the house all night slamming doors, he would relieve his feelings by picking up the boots outside his own door and flinging them down with all his might. Still, they were very happy. If he had been my husband I should have thrown him out of the window at the end of the first week of matrimony; but Elodie was of a more tranquil nature. In truth, as time went on she lost all her individuality and picturesqueness and became submerged in Hilaire, who had what might be called a violent personality.

Of course he was as brilliant as ever, and when he monologued I forgot his sins of the night; he shed light on every subject he pounced upon, dissected, tossed into the air, where the particles cohered in iridescent bubbles and floated off into space.

I also enjoyed meeting the dons, although some were

rather fearsome. One, when we dined at his house, showed me the watch Charles I wore on the day of execution. Much to my regret I did not meet Walter Pater, whom, boneless and bloodless as he was, I admired for his erudition and superlative style.

Oxford is a city of surpassing beauty, but the atmosphere is so heavy that I was always fearful of disgracing myself when in company by nodding. Altogether, I was glad to leave.

I remained in London four years at this time, and then, although I had intended to live there permanently, I returned to America on an impulse of the moment. At a dinner one night late in the autumn I sat next to a clever and interesting man who had been Governor in one of the Asiatic possessions for many years, and after entertaining me with some of his experiences, he began to ask me searching questions about American politics and Washington personalities. Nothing had ever interested me less than American politics, and it was not the first time I had been forced to take refuge in glittering generalities. I knew far more of English politics, for they were discussed at every dinner table, and I plodded through newspapers daily in order to keep up.

But this man would have none of generalities. He wanted specific information, and as I was an American novelist who was supposed to be interpreting her country for the enlightenment of the British public, he thought he had come to the right source.

'I can't tell you a thing!' I exclaimed in despair finally. 'And I am ashamed of myself. But this is what I'll do - spend the winter in Washington, and write a political novel. If I miss anything it won't be my fault.'

'Do!' He was evidently bucked at the idea he was to be the mainspring of a novel. 'You will find that you could

have written nothing that would interest the English public more.' He proved to be a true prophet, for *Senator North* was the most popular of my books in England, and to this day I rarely meet a Briton who doesn't immediately refer to it. It always irritates me, and I feel like asking them if they haven't read anything I have written since.

## BOOK V

SO, in December of that year of 1899, I found myself seated in the members' gallery of the United States Senate on the first day of its annual assembling. It was a brilliant scene; the galleries were crowded; diplomats were in full uniform; women of importance superbly gowned; every seat on the floor occupied by more or less dignified senators – a spittoon beside each desk!

As a senator must be the hero of my book I was somewhat disconcerted to observe that all of these statesmen were either middle-aged or elderly. I had had some one of about thirty-four in mind, but as I had promised to adhere strictly to facts, I discarded the idea of a semi-youthful hero promptly, and searched those faces eagerly for one that should at least express power and personality. I had met many interesting men of middle-age in England, and surely there must be as many in this headquarters of American achievement.

But they didn't look very promising; and I had never seen so many bald heads in my life. I became fascinated noting the varying tints on those polished domes. Some were as marble-white as the Father Christmas beards that depended below. Others were as pink as new-born babes. Some were of a delicate ecru, Jersey cream, old ivory; two were freckled, and three jaundice yellow. One was bright scarlet, doubtless from temper, for its owner was quarrelling violently with his neighbour. Well! At least I would have no bald-head for hero. That was flat.

Vice-President Garret A. Hobart was in the chair on the rostrum, an agreeable man whom I subsequently met. He had a curious fate; although, to be sure, others had met



it and for the same reason. Coming from a plain American home, he was completely fascinated by the elaborate dinners of Washington; owing to his position and genial personality he was invited out every night. All Washington dinners at that time began with large, fat oysters, ran through eight or ten courses, heavy-laden with fish, flesh, and fowl, and wound up with ice cream. It was a self-imposed duty of every resident senator to warn the incoming colleague against gorging; the majority heeded the warning, but a few did not and Vice-President Hobart was one of them. He ate straight through every dinner from oysters to ice cream and the result was that he died of cancer of the stomach.

Although I had not an idea what the 'fable' of my novel was to be, I felt none of the apprehension that had tormented me in Rouen. I *knew* there was a book waiting for me in Washington, and that it would arrive in due course. As the first step I established myself in a political boarding-house, recommended to me by a woman to whom my grandfather had given me a letter years before when I paid a brief visit to Washington. She bore the extraordinary name of Mrs. Lorenzo de' Medici Swett, but despite this handicap she had a position in Society; her husband was an eminent lawyer, and as she had been very fond of my grandfather she was kindly disposed at once – she had been absent during my first visit – and through her I met many persons both valuable and interesting.

I had brought a letter from American friends in London to Mrs. and Mrs. Henry Cleveland Perkins, and they became my intimate friends. I have never been greatly inclined to intimacies, and that was the only house in which I had ever run in and out, at all hours of the day and every day in the week. In fact I spent some part of every day there and lunched or dined with them two or three times a week.

Mr. Perkins was a celebrated mining engineer who had

made his fortune in South Africa. When he was ready to retire he and his wife chose Washington as a place of permanent residence, and were living in a handsome house on Connecticut Avenue. They made their entry into Washington society under the best possible auspices, for Mr. Perkins was a Bostonian of good family and had brought intimate letters to the 'cave dwellers.' The Duchess of Buccleugh was not more exclusive than those old and non-political residents, of whom the Riggsses were the most noted, and to be taken under their wing lifted one above the necessity of making further effort.

The Perkinses had two pretty daughters, Miriam and Ruth, ready to make their *début* into Society, two who were still schoolgirls, and Cleveland, then a little boy with Fauntleroy curls, who, years later, went as First Secretary of Legation with Mr. Egan to Copenhagen.

Mrs. Perkins was taller than her husband, handsome, gracious, dignified, well-equipped to take her place in any society, but too impulsive and warm-hearted ever to be a complete woman of the world. Our friendship always progressed smoothly, but Henry Perkins and I had some rousing fights. He had no use whatever for Cecil Rhodes, whom he considered a blight on the South African landscape, and he was all for the Boers. Of course my sympathies were entirely with the English, and one day the controversy became so heated that I inserted the lighted end of a cigarette into one of Mrs. Perkins's best table-cloths.

But despite the fact that we disagreed on every subject we got on very well. He liked argument and so did I. Poor Mrs. Perkins used to run away and shut herself in her room; I think she feared we might come to blows.

## I I

AFTER several years in England it is difficult to readapt oneself to American men. Unless they have spent at least

a part of their life abroad, they lack the subtlety, the suave polish, the suggestion that centuries have gone to the making of their brain cells of the men one meets in London society, both fashionable and intellectual. It is almost impossible for an American woman ever quite to understand Englishmen, and this adds to their fascination.

But I put them sternly out of mind, for nothing was more positive than that a typical American must be the hero of my unborn novel. I haunted the Senate gallery and one day my eye was arrested by a man I had not seen before, attracted at first merely because he stood so squarely on his feet, then by his voice and the curt, concise style of his speech. He was a rather short, square man, but authoritative in bearing. He had a beard, alas, but at least it was not a 'political beard,' i.e. one of those long wavy hirsute appendages beneath a shaven upper lip. It was close-clipped, trim, and iron grey like his well-cut hair; the face it framed was rugged and powerful with piercing black eyes. I asked who he was of a woman who sat beside me, and when I heard his name I understood why I had not seen him before. He was Senator Hale of Maine; Lawrence Rathbone had sent me a letter to him, but I had not presented it because I learned upon my arrival that he was absent from Washington. I would send that letter next day!

He looked as if he might be sixty, but if he 'panned out' he should be the hero of the book. Something new in heroes; and it would be quite a feat to make a man of sixty interesting enough to carry a novel.

By this time I had met a number of the senators, and as they had heard what I was in Washington for, they buzzed about me whenever I appeared in the members' gallery; each hoped to be the hero. One had a long sparkling golden beard of the approved political type, which I felt sure he polished with a silk handkerchief every morning. But none of them had made any appeal to me.

Senator Hale called immediately. He was a man of the world, an interesting talker; he had fine manners and great personal magnetism. I elected him forthwith and told him so. Of course he was interested and flattered, and promised to help me all he could. In fact he gave me the greater part of the political information I needed for the novel. I also learned something from the three or four not very important politicians in the boarding-house, and from many others I met; but the very atmosphere of Washington reeks with politics and one need hardly do more than breathe it in.

That was a gay and interesting winter. I met everybody, from cave-dwellers and diplomats down to minor 'representatives.' I went to crowded 'days,' of senators' and congressmen's wives, where you merely walked in one door and out the other; dined where the talk was as political as in London; attended receptions at embassies and the houses of Cabinet officials, elbowing queer-looking persons, tourists from the backwoods who marched in uninvited, regarding the seats of the mighty as lawful Washington exhibits; receptions at the White House where the crowds were queerer still, save at the diplomatic functions, when one must have a card to pass the portals. President McKinley was a genial man, a politician of the approved 'glad-hand' tradition, who made every one feel that he, or she, was the one person he had waited all his life to meet. His wife, who was an invalid, did not stand in the receiving line with the Cabinet ladies, but sat, silent and uninterested, in a chair behind her husband. She was subject to fits, and he always kept her close to him, so that if one came on inopportunely he could throw a handkerchief over her face. Such was high life in Washington.

### III

LONG before the end of the winter I had my 'fable,' and when I felt I had acquired all the knowledge both political

and social I needed, I crossed the ocean once more. I think it was Max Beerbohm – the Marvellous Max – who, at a dinner one night at William Heinemann's, had told me I must be sure to visit Bruges, and, recalling his words, I concluded to write my new book there.

The hotel was too noisy, and I found a *pension* where I had a room overlooking a large garden. My meals were served in private, and all I knew of the other boarders was from my window as they sat or promenaded below.

Bruges is one of the most picturesque cities in Europe, its old streets lined with houses built during the Spanish occupation, the roofs rising in tiers. There are heaven knows how many canals, narrow, winding, crossed by bridges that look as if they would crumble at any moment under one's feet. I never saw a city with a greater look of age in its older part; down on the grand canal there were factories for pottery and brass ware, and the waterway itself was always crowded with shipping. Bruges was anything but a dead city, and at that time had not recovered from its indignation at a novel by some Frenchman, which he had insultingly entitled *Bruges-la-Morte*. When I was there its streets were swarming with priests and nuns; driven out of France, they had taken refuge in Belgium, and it seemed to me that every other house large enough was a convent or a monastery.

An odd and rather touching thing happened just after I arrived. On either side of the most historic of the bridges was the effigy of a lion. They had stood there for centuries, but, after a long slow period of disintegration, one of them suddenly collapsed and fell into the canal. There was as much consternation as if Bruges's leading statesman, whoever he may have been, had died in his prime. The city fathers ordered another lion to be built at once, and draped the bereaved one in *crêpe* until a mate should keep him company once more!

Some one had suggested that as I had only a schoolgirl's knowledge of my country's history, it would be wise to read Bryce's *American Commonwealth* as a background for my novel of modern political life. I had brought it with me, and read it every day when not writing or exploring Bruges and the environs. It is a book of absorbing interest, but very long, and it was not until I had finished the rough draft of *Senator North* that I came upon a paragraph which proved to be a new and momentous turning-point in my writing life. It read as follows:

'One cannot note the disappearance of this brilliant figure (Alexander Hamilton), to Europe the most interesting figure in the earlier history of the Republic, without the remark that his countrymen seem to have never, either in his lifetime or afterwards, duly recognized his splendid gifts. Washington is, indeed, a more perfect character. Washington stands alone and unapproachable, like a snow-peak rising above its fellows into the clear air of morning, with a dignity, constancy, and purity which have made him the ideal type of civic virtue to succeeding generations. . . . But Hamilton, of a virtue not so flawless, touches us more nearly, not only by the romance of his early life and his tragic death, but by a certain ardour and impulsiveness, and even tenderness of soul, joined to a courage equal to that of Washington himself. Equally apt for war and statesmanship, with a profundity and amplitude of view rare in practical soldiers and statesmen, he stands in the front rank of a generation which included Burke and Fox and Pitt and Grattan, Stein and Hardenberg and William von Humboldt, Wellington and Napoleon. Talleyrand, who seems to have felt for him something as near affection as that cold heart could feel, said, after knowing all the famous men of his time, that only Fox and Napoleon were Hamilton's equals, and that he had divined Europe, never having seen it.'

Those words were written in letters of fire to me. I had

never forgotten my grandfather's little lectures on Hamilton, and I had been interested in all Bryce had said of him in the first volume; but it needed this summary, this splendid tribute from a great authority to excite my imagination as it never had been excited before. Then and there I made up my mind. I would write a life of Hamilton, rescue him from the undeniable obscurity into which he had fallen, give him back his fame. It seemed to me that all my training as a novelist had been but toward this end. Unless I had been reserved for this peculiar destiny why, during the ninety-six years since his death, had no one else done it? No novelist, I meant, for of course there were biographies of him. Likewise, they must be dull, or he would not be forgotten. Generations of novelists must have been blind to have missed such an opportunity.

I could hardly wait to get back to the United States and begin the necessary course of study, and as a slight compensation, I inserted his ghost into one of the chapters of *Senator North!*

Then I put him out of my mind, recalling the advice of Napoleon: 'When you have an enterprise on hand concentrate your mind upon it wholly; forget that anything else in the world exists.' . . . The book had to be copied twice, pondered over, polished, improved in every way possible.

I had, toward the end, a sudden misgiving that my untutored and wholly feminine mind – I regarded it as an insult when some male critic, wishing to pay me the highest compliment he could think of, termed my mind 'masculine' – might have got the politics all wrong, and I wrote to Senator Hale asking him if he would read the manuscript. He was enjoying his vacation in Maine but cabled to 'send it along.' Poor man, he must have had a dreary time plodding through a mass of manuscript in my handwriting, but I was very much amused when his critique arrived. He dismissed the politics with a brief 'all right,' and then wrote several pages

about the heroine! She had evidently captured his interest, but one thing I had made her do disturbed him greatly, and he begged me to omit the episode. I concluded he was right and did so.

But that is anticipating.

## I V

I HAD few interruptions. Senator Davis of Minnesota had given me a letter of introduction to the American Minister to Belgium, Bellamy Storer, and one day I came across it and sent it to Brussels. Mrs. Storer wrote at once, asking me over to lunch. They gave me a very pleasant day, and I was much interested to meet the hero of *Little Women*, with whom I had been briefly in love at the age of fourteen. He was a handsome man with fine manners, but struck me as having more outside than in; no doubt, however, he was admirably fitted for a post in which there was little to do but make himself agreeable and entertain handsomely.

Roosevelt came up for discussion at the lunch table and I well remember Mrs. Storer standing a match on end and saying: 'Teddy Roosevelt is as straight as that.' When the 'Dear Maria' letters were published I wondered if her enthusiasm suffered a decline.

I had not made up my mind to whom to give *Senator North*. Service & Paton had certainly done well by me and I liked them personally – Paton, at least; I rather felt that Service, who was somewhat old-fashioned, thought I was altogether too independent for a woman. But when I passed through London on my way to Bruges, John Lane had called and used all his eloquence to persuade me that it was my duty to return to him. He had taken *Patience Sparhawk and Her Times* when I was practically unknown and not an American publisher would consider it. When I reminded him that he had been as well rewarded as I, he



changed his tactics and became pathetic. I am hard-hearted and soft-hearted in streaks, and when he exclaimed: 'I am at your feet. I humbly beg you to give me your next book,' that organ – or possibly my vanity – was touched.

Still, I wouldn't promise. There is quite as much amusement in blandering with publishers, to keep them dangling, as may be derived from exercising another side of one's femininity with the ordinary male. It is good for their health too.

Personally, I never liked John Lane. He reminded me of a fat white frog. Also it was such an honour to be published by the Bodley Head, in companionship with such lights as Aubrey Beardsley, Max Beerbohm, Harold Frederic, William Locke, Henry Harland, George Egerton, Richard Le Gallienne, to say nothing of titled contributors, that Lane always looked pained at any demand for money and yielded grudgingly. There was a rumour that an argument on this pertinent question led to a fist fight in the office between himself and Harold Frederic.

I had received a letter from Frederic shortly after the publication of *American Wives and English Husbands*.

Homefield, Kenley, Surrey  
July 10th, 1898

MADAME:

'It is only the other day that *Patience Sparhawk* came into my hands (I fear my long delay in getting it was due mostly to my deep disinclination to put an added penny into John Lane's pockets), and since then I have read *American Wives and English Husbands*. Since I have never before written spontaneously to an author I didn't know about his work, I fancy that the latter book must really have impressed me more than I am able to explain to myself – much less to you. It has a kind of vitality of its own which forces recognition even if it eludes analysis. When I had finished it I said: "There is

this at least about it: she has a clearer vocation to write novels than any woman I know of;" and I trust you will pardon me for repeating it as the thing which best describes what is in my mind.

'Another thing that is definite in my mind is that you are going to do much greater things. The gap between *Patience* and *American Wives* is truly Californian in its dimensions. And on this head, if I knew you, I should harangue you about the peril, not perhaps of writing too much, but of writing too easily. You have in an extreme degree the talent of lucidity – but melody is an acquired gift with all but the laurel-wreathed few. Do take the pace a little more slowly, and listen with a more solicitous reflective ear – and get the trick of drawing *sound* out of the ink bottle. I adjure you thus cheekily, because I want you to beat all the other women out of their boots. In essentials you do it now, but if you write "United Statesian" and things like that, the critics will never find themselves realizing this truth.'

I took his advice – sometimes. But style is a matter of temperament, and unless one is cool and placid and suave by nature, or devoted to one ideal only, one cannot preserve a uniform style in writing. Herbert Spencer is difficult reading himself, and less for content than manner, but he wrote a valuable essay on style, and the admonition that made the deepest impression on me, when I read that little book in my nonage, was that style should vary with the subject; to use a crude illustration, one should not employ when describing a thunder-storm the same quiet manner as when picturing a valley at eventide. There were times to be staccato and times to be flowing, times for a classic simplicity, others for the reverberation of sound. And while it is easy enough to write well, individuality is inborn.

I had about made up my mind to give the book to Service & Paton, from whom I had received several letters, when

John Lane suddenly descended upon me. He brought a cheque as a propitiatory offering, and intimated that if I did not promise to give him *Senator North* he would remain in Bruges and dog my footsteps. To get rid of him I signed the contract.

I regretted it in the course of that very week, for Mr. Paton also turned up, and, as I have said, I liked him much better than Lane. However, he forgave me and took me over to Ostend, where we passed a pleasant day strolling on the *digue* and watching the gambling in the Casino.

After the manuscript had gone to Senator Hale I wrote a story for Lady Randolph Churchill's *Anglo-Saxon Review*, a sumptuous quarterly, each number bound in Paris in imitation of some centuries-old volume that had reposed in the libraries of kings. Then I spent several days in Ghent and Brussels, and took a trip up the Rhine. The boat was crowded with American tourists, and I realized for the first time what an astonishing variety of accents we had in the United States. The Rhine itself was a disappointment with its factory chimneys rising behind nearly every one of the ancient ruins.

After the return of the manuscript I went to London, a very depressed and anxious London, for it was the second year of what looked to be an interminable war, and every other person was in mourning. (One woman told me she wore black because she felt out of it in colours!) After I had seen all my friends who were in town, and replenished my wardrobe, I embarked for the United States on the greatest of my literary adventures: the raising from the dead of Alexander Hamilton.

I WENT first to Washington, as I wanted to see the portrait of Hamilton in the Treasury Building, and was agreeably surprised to find that he had been as handsome as he was gifted, with a face that seemed even on the old canvas to glow with personality and intelligence. It was the face of a genius and a charming creature as well, and my enthusiasm waxed. I have quoted Heine before.

I also wanted to talk with the more intelligent of the senators about Hamilton, and found, as I had anticipated, that he was one of the living characters in American history to them. I read a biography of him while there and concluded that if the others were as dull and pedantic it was no wonder the poor man was practically forgotten. They were, I soon discovered; and it is a matter of wonder to me yet that the most interesting man in American history should have inspired the stupidest biographies.

Once more I was puzzled and worried; I could not make up my mind what form to adopt for the resurrection of Hamilton. I was warned not to write a biography, for it would fall flat, no matter how well I did it; 'nobody read biographies.' The novel at that time was a pivotal thing; if I used that form I should be obliged to select certain striking events in his life only, ignoring his earlier and later days. I should have liked to write an epic, but Nature had denied me the group of brain-cells that turns out poetry; as Harold Frederic would have said, I was not one of 'the laurel-wreathed few.'

All I could do for the time being was to read, familiarize myself with the details of his life, of the history and politics of his time, of other personalities whose destinies were entwined with his; and it was not until I was in the Adirondacks during the late summer that I suddenly saw my way.

Perhaps he was floating round in the ether, and, tired of my otiosity, popped the idea into my head.

I would write a sequential and detailed life of Hamilton from birth to death, but treat it with the methods of fiction. It should be as accurate as study of all possible sources could make it, a history of the period as well as of its most fascinating character, but so presented that any reader might delude his lazy mind with the belief that he was reading a novel.

Meanwhile I had amused myself by writing *The Aristocrats*, a novel of the Adirondacks told in the form of letters from an English noblewoman, sojourning there with a consumptive brother, to a friend in England. It was mainly devoted to a description of those beautiful lakes and mountains, and a satiric presentation of certain types of Americans, fashionable and literary, whom I gathered for the occasion at various 'camps.'

As soon as it was finished I went to New York. The Iroquois in West Forty-fourth Street had just opened. I furnished an apartment and was about to settle down to work when I realized that in none of the biographies of Hamilton were there any details of his youth in the West Indies nor anything but the barest reference to the mystery of his birth. He was generally believed to be illegitimate but all his biographers, with true American niceness – our literature was then excessively refined – had shied away from this distressing rumour, and hurried on to things of real importance.

I thought I might learn something from the American Historical Association, and called on the librarian. He shrugged his shoulders disdainfully. What of it? Some things were better ignored. 'But I want to write an authentic life of Hamilton,' I said. 'And his origin is of the greatest possible importance. An illegitimate boy's childhood is likely to colour all his after life. He is never quite like other boys, pre- or post-natally. I see there is but one thing for me to

do: go to the West Indies and dig out the truth for myself.' He smiled superciliously. 'You will find nothing new there. There are a number of biographies of Hamilton – admirable works, all of them – and you may be sure the authors visited the West Indies and made extensive research. If they could find nothing, certainly you cannot.' 'Being a woman,' I felt sure he added mentally, and only wondered he was too polite to say it aloud.

I called on Hamilton's grandson, Dr. Allan McLane Hamilton, a distinguished alienist. He was very kind and interested and showed me such relics as he possessed, as well as the sufficient proof that Hamilton had written Washington's famous Farewell Address; but when I approached the subject of Hamilton's origin he became evasive.

I went down to lower Broadway and secured accommodation on a boat that was to leave for St. Kitts (St. Christopher), B.W.I., the following week.

One of my friends in New York was Mrs. Richard Lounsbury, formerly Edith Haggin of San Francisco. Through her I had met a niece of her husband, Grace Constant Lounsbury, a clever and gifted girl, who was also living in the Iroquois. She complained of a pain in her left lower regions and was convinced that her appendix was on the wrong side and all doctors were fools. I told her she had better come to the tropics with me and bake the pain out; it was probably nothing but neuralgia. No one knows less of the interior decorations of the human body than I, but this wild guess proved to be correct. She agreed after some demur to go with me, and as soon as we reached tropic waters the pain vanished.

## V I

THE boat was a mere cockle-shell and little used to passengers; it was one of a 'fruit line.' The food was bad; there were rats, and we nearly turned upside down in a storm off Cape

Hatteras. But the captain was very polite and did what he could to make us comfortable. He was roasted to death a year or two later during the eruption of Mont Pelée.

St. Kitts was a long green island fringed with palms and rising to a volcanic mountain in whose crater lava moved sluggishly. At that time Mont Pelée on Martinique was supposed to be extinct, and there was a lake in the crater where the residents of the island sailed or boated during their abundant leisure. When it blew up a friend I had made on St. Kitts wrote me that her island was very jealous of the sudden and world-wide fame of Martinique; it had a *live* volcano, which had done nothing! Truly, human vanity takes queer forms.

Miss Lounsbury and I established ourselves in an 'hotel' on St. Kitts; a quite terrible boarding-house. Cockroaches three inches long promenaded the floors and sometimes invaded the beds: the netting had holes in it and we were obliged to smear ourselves at night with oil of verbena to discourage the mosquitoes; there was neither meat nor ice and the chickens were killed an hour before they were served and too tough to eat; the bath was a hole in the ground in a pitch-dark room on the other side of the court; the servants were lazy and impudent, the landlady disagreeable, and one of the day-boarders was a Negro merchant who had excessively bad table manners. Nevertheless, we enjoyed every minute of our visit to St. Kitts – with one weird exception which I shall relate in due course.

The day after our arrival I received a call from Mrs. Spencer Wigley, the wife of the second official of the island. She called out of curiosity, but we became friends at once, and corresponded until her death. She was a charming woman of middle age with the thin body and bleached skin of Europeans who had lived too long in the tropics. But she was interested in all that went on in the great world she seldom visited, and any one from it was a godsend.

She told me what I had already suspected: that no biographer of Hamilton had ever visited the islands, no one, before me, who took any interest in him. And, alas, as far as she knew, there was nothing here to learn about him. As was generally known, he had been born on Nevis, the neighbouring island, but the church containing the records of births and deaths had been burnt by the French in 1782.

Nevertheless, I was not discouraged, for I had my own plans. I went to the Court House and asked the Registrar if he could recommend someone to search the Common Records of Nevis. An old Negro called on me next day, properly certified. He had elephantiasis, he was dirty and hideous, and in a mild state of inebriety, but as he was the best they had I agreed to pay him five pounds and dispatched him to Nevis.

During the week of his absence we amused ourselves driving about the island, watching the wild monkeys leap among the banana and coco-nut trees, the Negroes at work in the cane fields, dined with Mrs. Wigley, and attended a garden party at the Governor's house in the country. There was no newspaper on St. Kitts, but the Governor received daily cables from the Foreign Office, and while we were at the party a horseman dashed up with the official dispatches. The Governor grouped us about him on the lawn and read the latest news from the front. The contents were then typewritten and tacked on to the Court House door for all to read.

The official searcher returned, having discovered exactly nothing, and I determined to go to Nevis myself.

Miss Lounsbury was an ideal travelling companion; she was always ready for anything. We were told that the only accommodation to be had on Nevis were some fifteen times worse than those we were philosophically enduring on St. Kitts, and that, as only cargo boats ran between the two islands, we would be badly cramped. But, nothing daunted, we set forth.



It was a large sail boat that travelled principally at an angle of forty-five degrees, and was so packed with merchandise that we were stowed away on a seat aft barely large enough for one. A stiff wind was blowing and we and the cargo were drenched with spray, and by no means stationary. Life in the West Indies was certainly primitive. But the Caribbean Sea was sapphire blue and so was the unflecked sky; nor was it possible to shiver under that tropic sun. True, the boat might turn over and no doubt there were sharks, but we hoped for the best.

From a distance Nevis looks like a solitary peak in mid-sea, her base sweeping out on either side. But behind the great central cone – rising three thousand two hundred feet – are five or six lesser peaks between which are gorges dense with tropical growth, and mountain streams. Here and there are ruins of ‘Great Houses,’ occupied by wealthy planters when Nevis was the ‘Mother of the English Leeward Caribbees.’ A narrow road runs round the island, and facing the roadstead are the remains of Charles Town, once the gayest little city in the Caribbees; now one did not see a dozen white faces in the dilapidated streets, and the remains of the old stone mansions and walls were disappearing under a riotous tropical growth. At one end of Charles Town were the ruins of Bath House, in the early days of the nineteenth century a famous winter resort for English people of wealth; there are healing waters on the island, and one spring is so hot it will boil an egg in three minutes. There is always a white cloud clinging to the peak of Nevis, and when Columbus approached the island, so the story goes, he mistook it for snow (*neve*), and Nevis was named forthwith.

The American vice-consul, Mr. Greaves, met us at the landing, and as it was too late to visit the Court House he escorted us to our lodging, his remarks consisting entirely of apologies and commiserations.

It was quite as bad as we had been led to believe. We were used to cockroaches and mosquitoes, but here there was every known species of vermin. We were obliged to occupy the same room (and bed) and one could have cut the heat with a knife and packed it away for samples. We spent the night swearing, waging war against our base-born companions, shaking our night-gowns out of the windows. There was no netting on the bed, and verbena oil proved so appetizing to Nevis mosquitoes that they roosted on us all night and gorged themselves. I remember writing a description of that night to Mr. Bryce with whom I had been in correspondence for some time.

Early next morning Mr. Greaves took me to the Court House and introduced me to the clerk in charge, a young man of a rich old parchment hue, one of a family known as 'Mixed Pickles'; there were ten and each was of a different tint, ranging from coal-black to red-blond. The father had been a Scot.

He was very polite and spread several ponderous volumes on the table, incidentally remarking that the man I had sent over had squandered my five pounds in riotous living and had not even glanced at the records.

There was no index. I turned over the volumes page by page. All I had to go on was that Hamilton's mother's maiden name was Fawcett, that she had married a man named Levine, and subsequently either married or lived with James Hamilton. For these three names, therefore, I searched the records.

There were several Hamiltons, but none with whom I could connect Alexander. Oddly enough, there were Washingtons, but I had no interest in tracking them down. The name Levine I did not come across at all, but toward the very end of that long search I found a deed of separation between John and Mary Fawcett, who had had a large estate (Gingerland) on the other side of the island.

John, being apparently an impossible husband, his wife had appealed to 'His Excellency William Matthews, Esquire, Chancellor and Ordinary in Chief for the Leeward Charibee Islands,' and he had granted her a legal separation and ordered the planter to divide his estate with his wife and settle a yearly income upon her. The deed was executed on February 4th, 1740, 'in the fourteenth year of the reign of George the Second.'

Here, at least, was a beginning. The conclusion was unavoidable that these were the maternal grandparents of Alexander Hamilton, for no other Fawcetts were to be found in the records and no resident of that time could pass unmentioned. Nothing was said in this document of children, but there must have been several, for Hamilton had been brought up on the Island of St. Croix by two of his maternal aunts, Mrs. Mitchell and Mrs. Lytton. I could only assume that his mother was the youngest, but was determined to find out.

## V I I

WE drove all round the island and climbed the lesser peaks, explored the gorges, and lunched with two quite happy old maids who lived in the house of their ancestors and vowed they would not live anywhere else. The old stone house looked to be of dubious comfort, but the flowers that surrounded it were gorgeous in colour and the orchard was heavy with every variety of tropical fruit. They were of English descent, of course, and took in a London newspaper; their bookcase was well-stocked with old-fashioned novels; and a copy of Mrs. Humphry Ward lay on the table in the dim cool drawing-room. They prided themselves upon being *au courant* with life beyond the tropic zone and even discussed the war. Their complacency seemed to me quite terrible, a ghostly echo of Menlo Park.

At the end of the third day we returned to St. Kitts and I went at once to the Court House. It was probable that Mrs. Fawcett after the separation had moved to that island, for certainly Nevis was not large enough to hold her and John Fawcett, and there was nothing to do but search all the records coincident with the earthly progress of that daughter destined to be the mother of Alexander Hamilton.

The officials and clerks of the Court House were all coloured, but well educated and very polite. They hunted here and there for the older records, and I went through them day after day, while Miss Lounsbury amused herself with the young men of an American training ship that was paying the island a brief visit.

I am afraid I demoralized the commonly tranquil atmosphere of that Court House, for I demanded their constant attention, dispatched them to look for missing volumes, called repeatedly upon some one to decipher or explain. They were all very nearly as interested as I was in that labyrinthine hunt through the past, and the name Hamilton was on everyone's lips. But one day the Registrar groaned aloud. 'Oh, Mrs. Atherton!' he exclaimed; 'what have you made me do? This is a most important deed and I have made it out to Alexander Hamilton!'

But I had no mercy and kept them running.

For days I found nothing; not a familiar name. Finally a clerk remembered that he had once seen an old volume in one of the cellars. I sent him for it and he found it in the course of an hour. All these old volumes for some inscrutable reason smelt like opium, and this new one more than any. But there were so many smells in the West Indies that one more or less mattered nothing.

There was no index and I turned the brittle leaves of the aged volume slowly. There came a moment when I uttered a loud exclamation and every man in the room rushed to my table. 'Look! Look! Look!' I cried, almost

dancing up and down in excitement: 'A deed from Mary Fawcett of three slaves to "My beloved daughter Rachel Levine"!'

And then a strange and almost terrifying thing happened. As they stood crowded about me, reading over my shoulder, the page crumbled to dust, like an old corpse exposed to air. The other pages remained intact, but it was as if that old page died muttering: 'Now that I have borne witness I may rest in peace. For over a century I have waited for you, curious prying stranger from the North, and if your hand fails you, at least no other shall seek and find.'

I think we all shivered a little, as if the breath of a charnel house had suddenly invaded the room, and some one gave a nervous laugh; but at least it was a matter for congratulation that others had seen the record of that deed as well as I. And read it through.

Of one thing I was now certain. The acknowledged date of Hamilton's birth was January 11th, 1757. The date of this transfer of slaves was May 5th, 1756. Rachel must have been very young when she married Levine, and her alliance with James Hamilton begun about the time this deed was executed. I discovered later that she was thirty-two when she died in 1768, which would have made her twenty when Hamilton was born.

I learned also from that deed that Rachel was undoubtedly living with her mother, who, feeling that she had not long to live, wished to make sure that what little property she had left could be claimed by no one but her youngest and favourite daughter.

I went through every cemetery on the island – as I had done on Nevis – looking for I hardly knew what, but a chance date might give me a clue of some kind. I found nothing, however, for the tombs and tablets were of sandstone, and the older ones had crumbled or Time had obliterated.

ated the inscriptions. I was thankful when the search was over, for I had waded through weeds and grasses up to my waist, with lively visions of snakes, scorpions, and tarantulas. I saw nothing more formidable than lizards.

## VIII

BEFORE we left St. Kitts Miss Lounsbury had a singular experience.

The hotel was built about three sides of a court, all doors opening upon an inner gallery. On the street side was a high wall whose gates were locked at ten p.m. Our windows were high above the ground, and we left both them and our doors open at night in the vain hope of a draught. My room faced the distant gates and Miss Lounsbury's was at the far end of the right gallery.

I had noticed that my companion was looking rather haggard, but attributed it to the heat until I caught an expression of wildness now and again in her usually steady and rather scornful eyes. I asked her finally if she were ill, or suffering from insomnia; and then I realized from her evasive replies that something had occurred seriously to upset her. She was a valiant gallant little thing, whose intellect had been trained at Bryn Mawr, prided herself upon being a materialist, despite a genuine poetic faculty, detested feminine weaknesses, and dressed herself in severe tailor-made frocks in the fond belief that they made her look like a boy. What was my amazement therefore when she at last confided to me that she believed her room was haunted.

'You know I don't believe in ghosts,' she said disgustedly. 'I! But there is certainly something strange about that room. I wake up suddenly in the night with the horrid sensation that someone is watching me, but when I light a candle there is no one. That is not the worst!' Her deep-

set black eyes expanded. 'Twice now my sheets have been jerked half off the bed. I lit the candle both times and got up and looked under the bed. Nothing! Nor have I heard even a stealthy footfall.'

I was properly impressed. She might possess imagination, but that was the last sort of flight it would take. What on earth . . . But I said promptly: 'You must change your room, of course. I'll speak to Mrs. Blank (I have forgotten the woman's name) at once.'

'But don't tell her what I've told you,' she said peremptorily. 'I detest that woman, and I'll not have her sneering at me for a coward.'

I promised, and sought out our unpleasant landlady. She had no other room; her house was full, as it always was during the winter. But I noticed that her eyes were furtive, and she darted a suspicious look at me. Why did Miss Lounsbury wish to change her room? We had the two best rooms in the house. I replied blandly that she was disturbed by the noises in the street at night, and was feeling the effect of loss of sleep.

'I've nothing else,' the woman muttered. 'She'll have to stay there.'

There was no doubt that she was concealing something, and I went over to see Mrs. Wigley. She had told me that every house on the island was haunted, and had a ghost of her own, although she had never seen it.

She looked embarrassed when I told her of Miss Lounsbury's experiences, and I demanded to know if there was any reason why that room should be haunted. I had to press her hard, but finally it came out. She had hoped we would never hear the story, and had asked our other acquaintances not to mention it.

Mrs. Blank had had a daughter whom she treated with malignant cruelty. The girl had finally run away, but after wandering about the islands, rather less reputably than

more, she returned to St. Kitts in an advanced stage of consumption. It sounded like a good old-fashioned melodrama. She arrived at night, and crawling feebly to her old home, knocked on the gates until Mrs. Blank was aroused. When they were finally opened she was lying in a heap on the stones unconscious.

Nothing could touch the flinty heart of that mother and she would have left her to die there had she not feared the consequences to herself. So she unwillingly carried the girl to the room farthest from her own and put her to bed. There she died a week or two later cursing her mother and threatening to haunt her.

'There is no doubt that room is haunted,' said Mrs. Wigley seriously. 'Others have had the same experience, and left by the next boat. Mrs. Blank never lets it unless the house is full.'

'There is nothing for you to do,' I said to Miss Lounsbury when I had passed on the story, 'but to sleep on a cot in my room. I don't want a lunatic on my hands, and our boat does not come for ten days.'

But she was full of intellectual pride. She wouldn't give in. She'd stick it out. Ghosts! She didn't believe in ghosts. She was a rank materialist. She'd probably imagined things. She was writing a dramatic poem, and no doubt her nerves were overwrought.

It was broad daylight.

'Do *you* believe in ghosts?' she asked, giving me a sharp look. 'You're so beastly feminine I shouldn't be surprised.'

'I don't know what femininity has to do with it.' I always enjoyed arguing with her. 'A good many men belong to the Theosophical Society. I don't believe in spiritualism. Probably because I don't wish to. It's vulgar. But ghosts? Why not? I am far too much of an egoist to believe that physical death will be the last of me. I rather like the idea of reincarnation; better still, of being born into other worlds



where human intelligence may be more highly developed than it is on this planet. But while the discarnate ego is roaming round in space why shouldn't it swoop down on its old haunts occasionally, if only out of curiosity? After all, there is only one thing we do know and that is that we do not know anything.'

'Ghosts are a projection from the subconscious,' she said loftily, and went to her room to lose herself in poetic creation.

That night I awakened suddenly with the eerie sensation there was someone in the room. Sure enough! A white figure was standing by my bed! I was about to utter a wild shriek when I was reassured by a small trembling voice.

'Do you mind if I get into your bed?' asked the rank materialist. 'I really cannot stand it any longer.'

'Do!' I exclaimed with the cordiality of profound relief. 'This bed is wide enough for three.'

She crept under the mosquito netting and made herself as small as possible on the extreme edge. We both detested sleeping with anybody and had resented those nights on Nevis.

The next morning I again begged her to have a cot brought into my room, but she declared – in broad daylight – that she had only been super-nervous the night before, and would despise herself if she yielded to foolish fears.

It was two nights later, when, kept awake by Negroes singing on the beach below my window, I heard, sudden and swift, the sound of bare feet in the gallery, and in another moment the poet-materialist had slipped under the netting and curled herself on the edge of the bed. Not a word was exchanged between us. When I awoke next morning she was gone.

This happened for several nights and then she took another stand. 'I'll stick it out to-night if I die for it,' she said through her teeth. 'I *won't* be a fool!'

'You'll probably die for it,' I retorted. 'You would

already have lost pounds if you'd had them to lose, and your eyes are in the back of your head with black circles down to your cheek bones.'

That night I slept alone. In the morning she came into my room before I had finished dressing. She was as white as the cloud on Nevis and her eyes recalled the old simile: two burnt holes in a blanket.

'I've seen it,' she said in a weary voice and sinking into a chair. 'I've seen a ghost!'

'Really?' I asked, much interested. 'Do you mean to admit that you -- *you* -- have seen a ghost?'

She nodded miserably. 'It wasn't even during the night. I slept well enough; there was no jerking of the sheets nor anything else. But this morning . . . You know there is a screen between my bed and the door. I heard -- perhaps *felt* is a better word -- someone enter and thought it was the maid with the coffee, although I wondered why she had come so much earlier than usual. No one appeared. I said: "What are you waiting for? I am awake." Then someone came slowly round the end of the screen and stood at the foot of the bed.' She shuddered. 'It was a girl. All in white . . . a shroud . . . she had enormous expressionless eyes . . . her black hair hung down on either side of her sunken white face -- and on the shroud . . . Still, I thought, I hoped, it might be some one walking in her sleep, and managed to speak to her . . . She vanished. Just that. She did not go behind the screen again. Just disappeared.'

I was much impressed. Who would not have been? 'And do you now believe in ghosts?' I asked curiously.

She shrugged. 'I know what I saw. And if you don't mind I'll sleep in here until we go. Thank heaven that will be two days from now.'

It was two hours later. I was sitting by the window reading an old book on the islands Mrs. Wigley had given me. Once more the rapid pitter-patter of familiar feet in the gallery.

Miss Lounsbury entered with a large open Bible in her arms. Her eyes were popping. 'Look at this!' she gasped. 'Look at this!'

I looked. There was a photograph lying between the leaves. It was of a dead girl laid out on a bed, her black hair unbound and spread along the white shroud.

'*That* is the face I saw this morning,' she said in a strangled whisper. 'Feature for feature . . . hair . . . only her eyes were open.'

'How did you happen to find this?' I felt extremely uncomfortable.

'You know I am writing on a Biblical subject. I needed a quotation. This Bible was on a table in my room. I opened it and found this!'

'Doubtless it travelled through your subconscious to the foot of the bed! Why not accept that explanation as a sop to your mighty intellect?'

But she slept in my bed that night and the next.

## I X

WE took leave of the pleasant friends we had made on St. Kitts and sailed for St. Croix. One of the most interesting things about the West Indies is that from the time you reach the first group there is always one or more islands on the seascape. From St. Kitts we could see not only Nevis but Montserrat, which, by the way, had been shaking for three months and so terrified its inhabitants that it was now almost deserted – the first intimation of that dire underground drama that was to culminate in the terrific eruption of Mont Pelée, and the smothering and roasting of some thirty thousand inhabitants of St. Pierre at its base.

The Caribbean Sea is of a dazzling sapphire blue, but near the shore it turns to the clear limpid green of chryso-

phase. It is then one sees the flying fish darting about like silver blades. All the islands – those we visited at least – face open roadsteads, and we were obliged to leave the vessel where the green waters began, climbing precariously down the side on a swinging ladder and taking to open boats. The rowers begged steadily, and so did about fifty other natives that swam about us. On St. Kitts we never left the hotel without being followed by whining Negroes, although there was no real poverty on the island. But Americans were fair game.

St. Croix did not look very promising as we approached it. It is a coral island, and from this end gave the impression that the entire landscape was quite flat, with nothing to relieve the monotony of the cane fields. The town of Frederiksted was pretty, with its Spanish arcades, but little more than a hamlet. The Virgin Islands were Danish possessions and St. Croix the most important of the group, but the seat of government was in Christiansted at the other extremity of the island. Its harbour was too shallow for steamers and all who would visit the capital must disembark at Frederiksted and drive across the island.

There was nothing to take us to Christiansted but a rattletrap of a stage, and the long drive held little more of interest than of comfort. Until the great hurricane of 1899 an avenue of royal palms had connected the two towns, but to-day there was nothing left of those once magnificent trees but their stumps. The sun beat down with a vicious energy that made the heat of the Leeward Islands seem Northern by comparison.

We approached Christiansted toward sunset and were delighted with its appearance. It is surrounded by hills, and, oddly enough, as we drove down the slight incline into King Street, it had the effect of a high mountain village. Momentarily. It was anything but a village. It was the only thing resembling a city we had seen since we left New

York. On the right it straggled away into the irregular quarter of the poor, almost smothered in groves of coconut and palm, but all along King and Company Streets the massive houses stood close together, each with its Spanish arcade and outside stair which led to an upper balcony. Many of these were business houses, but the private residences were built about courts set with palms and flowering shrubs, gorgeous in colour. Government House was an imposing structure, and above it was the high bold curve of a hill studded with what had once been flourishing estates, now neglected. The streets were very clean.

Our hotel seemed palatial after our late experiences; the landlady was agreeable; and there was a far greater variety of food. We even had butter, something we had not seen since our arrival in the West Indies.

Although the island was Danish there was an English clergyman for British residents, and I thought it best to call on him first. As Alexander had spent his boyhood on St. Croix it was possible that his mother had died – or married James Hamilton – there. I was, for the moment, even more interested in Rachel than in her great son.

Dr. Watson was kindness itself, but it took him some time to unearth the old records. When he did I found what I sought in the 'Burial Register of the Island of St. Croix of the year 1768.' It was the seventh entry of the year:

'Rachel Levine, February 26th, aged thirty-two.'

So, she had died Rachel Levine. There had been no second marriage.

I stared, fascinated, for nearly ten minutes at that entry in faded ink. It was as if a thousand gossamer veils swung between the two centuries and they had parted for a brief moment, giving me a glimpse of a past that I must rely upon a few brief facts to recreate. But a friendly voice seemed to whisper encouragement down that long vista.

Dr. Watson took me out to the Grange estate, which had

been owned by Peter Lytton, Rachel's brother-in-law. There was a private burying-ground on it and I hoped to find Rachel's grave. But there was nothing left in that rank enclosure but a few fallen headstones, the inscriptions obliterated long since. Of Mr. Mitchell's plantation I could learn nothing.

I called at Government House but here I encountered a blank wall. All the early records of the Virgin Islands were in Copenhagen.

Dr. Watson told me of several aged women in the town, and I went to see them, hoping for crumbs from the past. The first one was so insulted at the fancied intimation she had been alive in the eighteenth century that I was obliged to exert all my diplomacy in dealing with the others.

'Are there any legends of Hamilton or his mother in your family – handed down, of course, from your great-great-great-grandparents?' I would shout into the deaf ears of some toothless female rising ninety. But not one of them had ever heard the name Hamilton before. Nor Levine. Nor Mitchell. Nor Lytton. All I learned from those interviews was something more of the deathless vanity of woman. Miss Lounsbury was highly amused.

There was nothing further I could do but familiarize myself with the town and the surrounding country, once so familiar to Hamilton, and get from more communicative inhabitants the details of the hurricane of 1899. It was the great hurricane of a century before that had blown Alexander Hamilton straight into American history. He had written so graphic an account of it that money had been raised to give him an education in New York; and I knew that I must write a description of it myself. (His own I discovered a year or two later in Copenhagen, and published it with the Fawcett deed of separation and a photograph of the record containing the entry of Rachel's death in the volume: *A Few of Hamilton's Letters*.)

What next? There was nothing more to be learned in the West Indies. I was anxious to return to New York and get to work on my book. But it seemed a pity not to visit St. Thomas. While we were still on St. Kitts Miss Lounsbury had begged me to go to Martinique, but as my mind was concentrated Napoleonically on one object only I wouldn't hear of it, and deeply regretted this lost opportunity later. St. Pierre was the most picturesque town in the West Indies, one of the most picturesque in the world. The streets were so steep they were really stairs up the mountain side, and on them were always to be seen beautiful creole women in their native costumes balancing water jars on their heads. Balconied houses rose on either side surrounded by palms and coco-nut trees and all the gorgeous colour of the tropics. One can see it only through the eyes of Lafcadio Hearn.

We had had a glimpse of St. Thomas on our way down, an island of surpassing beauty in the sunset. The town of Charlotte Amalie rises on three conical foothills that bulge at equal distance from an almost perpendicular mountain, the tip, it is said, of a range whose foundations are four miles beneath the sea. The three sections of the town swept from base to pointed apex with a symmetry so perfect, their houses were so colourful and looked to be so light and airy of architecture amid the rich tropic growth, that one received the impression of a great seraglio, a collection of pleasure houses of some Eastern potentate; an illusion the more striking when one's eye fell to the tall warehouses crowded along the water front. High on the right was 'Bluebeard's Castle,' of piratical tradition.

The vision had haunted us both, and I finally persuaded myself that Alexander, when serving as a clerk in Mr. Mitchell's store, had been obliged to visit St. Thomas on business. It was the *entrepôt* of the West Indies in his day, and did a brisk trade in bay rum, molasses, rum, and cane, with the other islands as well as with the outer world.

There were only cargo boats between St. Croix and St. Thomas, so we crossed the island again and embarked from Frederiksted on the now-and-then steamer for Porto Rico. There we were accommodated on a sloop, which would land us, we were assured, at St. Thomas in three hours.

But it took the entire day and a part of the night. We were becalmed and rolled about in an oily swell. The only refuge from the torrid sun was to be found in two little deck houses, so low we were obliged to lie down. There we lay and assuaged our hunger with bananas —there was no other food but beans, which we declined after one glance into the hole where they were cooked — and commiserated each other.

## X

WE arrived at Charlotte Amalie at midnight. The hotel, almost on the top of the central hill, was vaguely indicated to us by the captain of the sloop, who promptly left us alone on the wharf. There was no one to meet us, for it had been impossible to engage rooms; there was no communicating boat during our sojourn on St. Croix, and all cables were sent via London.

It was a dark tropic night. The stars were golden spangles on a black velvet sky. There was not even a breeze to rustle a friendly welcome through the palms. Not a living soul abroad but ourselves. We started up a flight of steps a little off the perpendicular; one hundred and seventeen there were; Miss Lounsbury, who was athletic, springing lightly ahead. It was an eerie night and scene, but nothing short of ghosts daunted *her*.

We managed to find a bell when we reached the only house that looked like an hotel, and rang and rang and rang. We were about to sit down on the top step and take counsel,



when a woman emerged upon the upper balcony and glared down at us under the faint light of a swinging lamp.

'What do you want at this time of night?' she demanded sourly. 'A pretty time to come waking decent people up! Who are you?'

I explained in my most dulcet tones that we were American travellers who had come from St. Croix, where her house had been warmly recommended to us. We had expected to reach St. Thomas in the afternoon, but unfortunately had been becalmed.

'Well, you can't get in here to-night,' she said, in no wise mollified. 'The rooms are not done up and the servants are all asleep. There's no waking *them*. And I certainly ain't going to do them myself. Come back to-morrow.'

'But we've got to sleep somewhere,' I protested. 'We don't mind the rooms not being done up.'

'You can't come in to-night. I won't be bothered.' She was about to retreat when I asked in despair if she could tell me of some one who would take us in, and she replied ungraciously there was a house at the foot of the steps on the left side where we might find a room.

'She's worse than that old fiend on St. Kitts,' said Miss Lounsbury murderously, as we groped our way down the steps, almost invisible under the overhanging trees. But she was too good a sport to complain. I wondered what I should have done with the average pampered American girl on my hands.

They did take us in at the hovel at the foot of the hill, and my impression is that we slept on the floor. But my memories of the rest of that night are vague.

As the boat for New York would not arrive for a week we were obliged to pocket our pride and solicit the inhospitable lady on the hill once more. But this time we found her in high good humour, and were given separate rooms. They were not clean, and I will swear that the cockroaches

– one of which I found under my pillow – were a foot long. Rats scampered up and down the galleries all night, and we were warned against scorpions.

Charlotte Amalie, so enchanting at a distance, was anything but picturesque at close quarters. The streets were full of rubbish, the houses that had looked so fairy-like from the harbour were of stone painted in crude primal colours, worn off in spots; the palms were dusty and ragged, and the long flights of steps swarmed with naked brown children, looking like slabs of chocolate, and frowzy Negresses.

The American Consul was a Negro. I called on him as a matter of form. While I waited for him in a big bare room I looked at the pictures on the wall. With one exception they were all of famous Negroes: Toussaint L'Ouverture, Booker Washington, Douglass, others whose names I have forgotten. The exception was Abraham Lincoln, and in that *galère* he too looked negroid. I recalled certain whispered rumours of his ancestry and wondered.

We should have had a dull time on St. Thomas, for no one called on us, and there was no place to walk, every step, save on the crowded water-front, being up or down hill, but shortly after our arrival a cable-repairing ship anchored in the harbour, and the officers were agreeable young men and very hospitable.

My landlady had married a mulatto. Her sons were heavily tarred, but her daughter, a handsome girl with European features, had a dead-white skin. I had heard her spoken of on St. Kitts, where she visited relatives of her mother occasionally and had been remarked, by the aristocracy, as a 'white Negress.' 'You can always tell them,' Mrs. Wigley had said to me. 'They can't fool us. There's a *something* about them that gives them away.' And it seemed to me when looking at the girl that the 'something' was a dark invisible tide moving below that thick white skin and that one glimpsed it in certain lights.

She was engaged to one of the young men on the cable ship, and he was of precisely the same ancestry and colour. His father was a planter and I believe he had been educated in England; at all events he was a gentleman, and it was he who extended to Miss Lounsbury and me the hospitality of the ship.

The other young officers, very trim and smart in their white uniforms, welcomed us cordially, gave us one or two admirable luncheons, lamented their exile, and their monotonous life in the Caribbean. Not one of them but had his plans for a future when he should have turned his back on the tropics for ever.

But all plans and hopes came to an untimely and terrible end. They were in the harbour of St. Pierre, repairing the cable, broken by a preliminary earthquake, when the surging underground tides of steam and lava roared their hideous way through the crater of Mont Pelée in the historic eruption of the century. The waters heaved with the land, tossed the ship high on the crest of a wave, and then sucked it down. The water itself was boiling.

## X I

NEW YORK ONCE MORE.

*Senator North* had been selling well on both sides of the Atlantic before I left for the West Indies, and had even been praised by two or three American critics – or so I was told; I no longer felt any interest in *Senator North*, and less in critics; my mind was too full of Alexander Hamilton. But when I returned I did read the American reviews of *The Aristocrats*, for, thinking to have some fun with the critics, I had published it anonymously.

Temple Scott, John Lane's representative in New York, sent them to me as soon as I arrived. My ruse had been

successful! The book was universally praised. 'There is the dignity of birth and breeding in every line,' wrote one enthusiastic critic, who evidently cherished ideals; 'the evidence of long centuries of birth and breeding behind her. (This was my noble heroine.) To be sure she is rather hard on some of our foibles, but we forgive her on account of her grace and wit.' 'The first novel of a brilliant and witty woman from whom we shall expect great things,' wrote another. But the majority of the critics suspected that the book was written by an experienced hand, who chose, for some reason, to hide her – or his – identity. Every author's name was put forth tentatively – save mine ! Even Oscar Wilde was mentioned, for who had known more noble ladies than he, and who had so pretty a wit?

And so it went. I was amused and delighted, but all the same I knew I had done a tactless thing; when I acknowledged the authorship of that book, as I had every intention of doing, those critics would never forgive me for making fools of them. And some of them never did.

I plunged at once into work. The Mechanics' Library was across the street, and Mr. Parker, the librarian, hunted out old books of reference that hadn't seen the light for a generation. Other works I needed I found at the Astor and Lenox libraries. In all, I must have read some two hundred volumes, for it was necessary to study the biographies of other men of that time, also innumerable 'letters' and old pamphlets. Oddly enough, the most interesting of the biographies was the least scholarly in style: Theodore Roosevelt's *Gouverneur Morris*. He had a slap-dash vivid manner that made his characters almost shout from the pages.

In Lodge's collection of *Hamilton's Letters* I came across an abbreviation that for some reason – instinct possibly – roused my curiosity, and I looked it up in the original and unabridged collection of those letters edited by one of Hamilton's sons. The paragraph omitted contained an

allusion to 'my half-brother, Peter Lavine.' (There were seven different ways of spelling that name, as I discovered later.) Now, why did Lodge leave out of his otherwise admirable edition that significant link? Had I not come across it practically by accident I should never have known that Rachel had had a child before she met James Hamilton. Morse makes no mention of this fact in his life of Hamilton, nor, curiously enough, does Lodge in his monograph, although he must have read all those letters through before editing them. No one is more vague when referring to Hamilton's origin. The more I read the more I was amazed at the lack of original research on the part of Hamilton's biographers; they had merely boiled down the seven or eight unspeakably dull volumes written and edited by Hamilton's son. It looked as if they had received a commission from some publishing house issuing a 'series,' and had raced through the task as quickly as possible. The oversight I have mentioned is but one of several. "

And they were anything but lucid in their boiling-down. One of Hamilton's most celebrated state papers was his *Report on Manufactures*. It dealt with the crucial question of tariffs, and was as far-reaching in its effects as his *Report on Public Credit*. I had every intention of dodging that long paper, for it was anything but an interesting subject to me. I would make an abstract from other abstracts, and dispose of manufactures in a paragraph. But of those abstracts by Lodge, Morse, and others I could make nothing. To put it plainly I couldn't understand a word; they might have as well been written in Chinese. I remember this was on a Sunday and I fumed at being held up in my work. As soon as the Mechanics' Library was opened next morning I took out the volume containing his Report in full. I had no difficulty in understanding it. Every word was like a winged arrow. Hamilton had an inimitable style, not only lucid, direct, simple, and distinguished, but he had the rare faculty

of making any subject that he handled fascinating. I became, while reading that long State paper, as interested in manufactures as in his quarrels with Jefferson. So much for genius.

I no longer thought about 'resurrecting Hamilton' nor that I had been elected for this holy mission. He was now as alive to me as he had been to his compatriots a century ago. As when, years later, I wrote *The Immortal Marriage* and *The Jealous Gods*, I lived, breathed, slept in the past. Every character of that period was a friend, acquaintance, or enemy, and I moved among them and listened to their voices. Every stone of those old buildings was a familiar friend. When I came up for air, New York was an alien city in which I had no place.

Nothing in life is so absorbing as writing an historical novel, re-creating an era and living in it. In no other mental work – save no doubt in poetry – is the imagination fully liberated, does the writer enjoy the divine sensation of having everything his own way! Facts, far from hampering, are stimulants; each opens up a new vista. Never would I have written anything but historical novels if I could have found enough of the dead and gone to appeal to me. Heine again. After *The Conqueror* was published I was asked several times to 'do' Lincoln. But although I should be the last to deny Lincoln's greatness I hated the sight of him. Dr. Nicoll wanted me to do Burr, but Parton had done that inimitably. Napoleon? He had been written to death. A large part of the enthusiasm in writing an historical novel derives from the fact that a great man is more or less forgotten, and you have all the sensations of an explorer.

I am still accused of being unfair to Jefferson. I got all my impressions of Hamilton's only worthy rival not from his enemies but from his own biographers and his published letters. As for Burr – one might not be able to respect him, but neither could any one help liking him. Despite what

seemed to be the general belief when *The Conqueror* was published, I did not 'hate Burr.' In fact I had only the friendliest feeling for him, for he had given Hamilton the proper dramatic end. Hamilton was born dramatically, lived dramatically, died dramatically. But for Burr, he would have breathed his last prosaically in bed a year or two later, for Life had worn him out.

## X I I

WHEN my lease at the Iroquois expired I went up to Tarrytown to finish the book. Why Tarrytown, I have forgotten. Possibly because there was a passable hotel there, on a height above the Hudson. My object in leaving New York was to get away from friends, who, with the exception of Miss Lounsbury, could see no reason why I should seclude myself, and were personally insulted because I gave orders I was not to be called on the telephone. The summer was over and they were returning to New York.

An aged grandson of Hamilton was living in Tarrytown and I hunted him up. He was eighty-seven but no doubt he still had all the brains he ever had had in his bird-like head, and he had lived with Mrs. Hamilton during some part of the half century she had survived her great husband. It irritated me beyond measure to hear him allude to Hamilton as 'grandfather.' Hamilton belonged to the entire United States, and no one, by the mere accident of descent, should presume to claim any right to him. It was an unpardonable liberty, and one that Allan McLane Hamilton, a man-of-the-world, would never have thought of taking. The old man, however, confirmed what I had already inferred about Hamilton's shattered health, and gave me one or two other valuable items of information.

Dr. Coutant, the leading doctor in Tarrytown, whom I

called in for some minor ill, took me to see Philip Schuyler, who had a place on the Hudson not far away. Mr. Schuyler was another Hamilton descendant, but far younger than the eldest surviving grandson; I believe one of Hamilton's granddaughters had married a Schuyler. He was very affable and showed me the remains of Hamilton's library and several household relics; but after *The Conqueror* appeared he never spoke to me again. He did not relish at all the world knowing he had the bend sinister in his coat of arms. Impossible to make these persons understand that Hamilton belonged to his country, not to them. If it came to any personal rights mine were stronger than theirs.

I had made up my mind, and this time definitely, to leave John Lane, having had as much of him as I could stand. As never again would I offer a book to any publisher, I merely mentioned this decision casually to a woman connected with the house of Macmillan. Mr. Brett approached me immediately. When I gave him an outline of the method I had conceived he said it was an interesting idea but so novel that the book would either be a great success or a flat failure. He would be willing to take the risk, however, if, instead of demanding the usual advance, I would accept an honorarium of five hundred dollars to bind the contract, and his assurance that he would send me at the end of the first month of publication all that the book had made meanwhile. This was before I left New York; I was too interested in writing the book to haggle over terms, and signed the contract. He sent me a cheque for three thousand dollars at the end of its first week on the market.

I had intended to call it *Alexander Hamilton*, but Mr. Brett protested vigorously. 'Nobody reads biographies.' I therefore sent him a list of hastily conceived titles and he chose *The Conqueror*. When I sent him the manuscript from Tarrytown he returned it with encomiums but asked



me to cut it down to four hundred printed pages and then send it directly to the printers. I sent it to the printers without opening the package. He must have seen by the proofs that I had not cut out a paragraph, but wisely said no more.

For the first time in five years I subscribed to a clipping bureau. I was very curious to read those reviews. It was more than likely the critics would not dare damn the book and betray their ignorance. Not one in a hundred, it was safe to assume, knew anything about Hamilton, not even that their country was still running on the financial wheels he had designed when Secretary of the Treasury. It would be impossible to read a work of that length and meticulous detail without being forced to the conclusion that the author knew what she was writing about; and, like it or not, they could not dispute that fact without placing themselves in a false position. They certainly had no time to read two hundred books for the pleasure of finding flaws in the work.

But some of the reviews were better than I had expected; and as I have quoted extracts from British reviews it is only fair I should give those I find in the back of *A Few of Hamilton's Letters*.

*New York Times*: 'Holds more romance than nine-tenths of the imaginative fiction of the day, and more veracity than ninety-nine hundredths of the histories. She is a master of her material, and her style, rich and picturesque, is the worthy vehicle of a story of this man.' *Philadelphia Times*: 'The exuberant imagination of the author and her flow of beautiful language furnish opening scenes which hold the reader spellbound.' *Boston Budget*: 'Brilliant and elevated in tone, and written throughout with a profound psychological insight.' *New York Mail and Express*: 'Admirable indeed in her impartiality, her adherence to historic truth.' *Chicago Record-Herald*: 'There is something at once surprising and delightful in the imperious hold which *The Con-*

*queror* takes upon the reader. It is a long book, but its compact and exhaustive knowledge of the whole revolutionary period is luminous at every point with literary sparkle and latent enthusiasm.' *New York Herald*: 'It may start a revolution in the methods of our historical novelists. It is a composite yet a splendid picture.' *Brooklyn Standard-Union*: 'Till now there has risen neither man nor woman to do what has been done in this exciting narrative of an exciting life . . . permeated with the passionate brain vitality of a woman who can write as well as think.' *New York Critic*: 'In *The Conqueror* Mrs. Atherton has made a literary experiment striking in its novelty.'

And more to the same effect. But the greater number of the critics were non-committal. They had no cause to love me, and to praise any book of mine was not in their *credo*; they merely gave a résumé of the book without comment. They dared not ignore a Macmillan book, nor one that might possibly be hailed by scholars as important, but they took good care there should be nothing to quote. Only one writer, the critic of the *New York Commercial Advertiser*, found it impossible to recover from the mortification of having been betrayed into praising my anonymous novel, and denigrated *The Conqueror* throughout two columns. He was discharged for 'having made a fool of his paper.'

Mr. Brett was so delighted with the immediate sales of the book that he talked of advertising it with sandwich-men, but I protested in horror. We were still incorrupted by the cinema, and all publicity was extremely dignified. I shouldn't mind a bit, to-day.



## BOOK VI

### I

**I** SPENT a few months in California and then went to Copenhagen. I had the theme for a new book in mind and had hit upon Denmark as a likely scene for the European part of it.

Denmark had always fascinated me; on the map it looked a proud aloof little country, and none had played a more picturesque role in the ancient history of Europe; with its Vikings and pirates and conquests, it had even attracted the notice of Pliny and Tacitus. For a small and otherwise unimportant country to be the piratical scourge of Europe for a few centuries, wafting its deeds as far south as the Mediterranean, was something of an achievement.

Perhaps there was also a subconscious urge at this particular time because it was so closely interwoven with the fates of Rachel and Alexander Hamilton; then too I hoped to discover additional information regarding both of them in the archives of Copenhagen for use in the contemplated volume of Hamilton's letters. While writing *The Conqueror* I had, in a roundabout way, employed a searcher of records, but he had done nothing but cash the draft. As much as anything, no doubt, was the desire to see a seldom-visited country and write about it.

I had taken letters and soon met a number of *Landstingmen*: members of the upper house of the Danish Parliament. I went to their houses both in city and country, and I suppose all of them were typical Danes. If there was even a diluted drop of piratical blood left in their veins there was no evidence of it; they remain in my mind as about the mildest people I ever met. But I liked them for their intelligence, good looks, and kindness, although one manifestation

of their hospitality worried me greatly. At every dinner table there were at least eight wine-glasses curved about each plate, and every time a new one was filled the host would raise his own and, with a polite bow, drink to me. I have no head for alcohol—it has always been a joke among my friends—and at the first dinner I attended I turned cold at the prospect of being carried out before it was half over, for of course I must drink in response; even eight sips of eight different wines, some of them charged, might bring about dire results. But whether it was the climate, or those wines of Denmark were singularly innocuous, I escaped disgracing myself, although I never summoned up courage to take more than one sip of each.

The Danes were very proud of the fact that their little country despite its fierce history was still serenely independent; prouder still perhaps that it had contributed an Empress to the throne of Russia, a Queen to England, and a King to Greece. On a gala night at the theatre I saw in the royal box the Dowager-Tsarina Dagmar, Queen Alexandra, King George of Greece (very handsome), the young King and Queen of Norway (the latter Princess Maud of England, whom I used to see in London riding on the top of buses with her sister Princess Victoria, enjoying a brief hour of freedom and no doubt feeling democratic), and King Christian, a tall, slender, aristocratic and pleasant-looking old gentleman. The women were abominably dressed in some nondescript material, high in the neck and long of sleeve, and both the older queens wore wigs at least three shades too dark. The play was one of those intensely dreary Northern dramas, not even by Ibsen. It was so unrelieved in its piled-up agony that I mortified my hostess by giggling.

I soon discovered why those statesmen were paying me such assiduous court. They were deeply disturbed because of a project to sell the Virgin Islands to the United States.

Denmark had already lost Schleswig-Holstein to Prussia, and it was a matter of pride never to part with another rod of their proud inheritance. But since the rise of beet sugar and the fall of cane, the revenue of the islands had so diminished there was a yearly deficit of a hundred thousand dollars in that particular budget. A powerful group in the Government was negotiating with the United States, and the party with which I happened to be associated was in a condition of patriotic despair and begged me to help them. Could I not write an article for some prominent American publication that would persuade the citizens of the United States of the elephant they would have on their hands if they bought those islands?

I was always apt to get into mischief between books; moreover I was sympathetic. I owed a great deal to those islands, and had put up a small monument to Rachel on St. Croix; it seemed a pity too that their picturesque old-world atmosphere should be destroyed by swarming Americans. I cabled to the editor of the *North American Review*, Mr. Rice, asking him if he would care for an article on the subject, and as he replied with some enthusiasm, I set to work with the aid of Captain Ramsing, who, with his wife, were the closest friends I made in Denmark.

It may be imagined how much I knew of the ins and outs of such a subject; Captain Ramsing dictated the greater part of the article and I put it into as interesting a form as I could compass. My Danes were particularly wroth with Henry White, First Secretary of the American Embassy in London, whose argument before the Senate of the United States in favour of purchase had carried great weight. I had met Henry White in London, but he meant nothing to me then and I attacked him fiercely.

I cannot recall a word of that article, but I do remember that it was designed even more for home consumption than for what influence it might have on the tax-payers of the

United States; it was to be translated after publication and a copy put into the hands of every voter in Denmark. I fancy most of the arguments were subtly addressed to them, and they were to be duly impressed by the endorsement of the leading American review.

Well! That article did play its part in delaying the purchase of the islands for something like fourteen years, and it was well I wrote *Senator North* when I did, for I should have been less well-received in Washington had I conceived the idea a year or two after my solitary excursion into diplomacy. (When I returned to America I also wrote a letter to the *New York Times* and gave out several interviews apropos the article in the *North American Review*. Some of the American newspapers said unkind things about me, but I was used to that. One or two even hinted at treason, but the clouds rolled by.)

Captain Ramsing, having spent several years on St. Croix in command of a small army contingent there, was much interested in *The Conqueror* and offered to go through the archives himself. He found the newspaper containing Hamilton's fateful account of the hurricane, as well as other information, not all of it palatable. Levine had divorced Rachel in the Ember Court at St. Croix, not only for her relations with James Hamilton but for dubious conduct on the Island of Barbados. This raises an interesting question. Washington was on Barbados in 1756. Hamilton was born in the following year. Washington's devotion to Hamilton was so marked that their enemies spread the story they were father and son. What foundation they thought they had for this particular bit of scandal is unrecorded. Levine specifically states that Rachel was on Barbados in 1756.

Interesting if true.

His language regarding Rachel was primitive in the extreme, and I was glad I had seen those documents too late to upset my ideal of her, and the continuity of the story. As

it was I preferred to believe that Levine had been animated by hatred and spite. And this is quite possible.

## I I

I RETURNED to New York and compiled the volume of Hamilton's letters, then went to the Adirondacks to write the first part of *Rulers of Kings*, whose second part I had purposed to lay in Denmark. I now intended to place those scenes in Austria and Hungary – other countries I wanted to visit! – and after the first half was finished I went to Munich with the intention of living there for several years. I preferred living in Europe and chose Munich not only on account of its beauty and its radical difference from all things American, but because it was so centrally located I could travel to almost any part of the Continent within twenty-four hours.

Before I took an apartment, however, I visited Austria and Hungary for the locale. Bellamy Storer was now Ambassador to the Dual Empire; he was absent when I arrived, but Lawrence Rathbone had sent me a letter to the military attaché, Major Harris, and he gave me a card that would ensure entrance to the palace at Budapest. He and Mrs. Harris also told me all that it was necessary for me to know about court life in Vienna.

While I was there I saw, from the balcony of the Consulate, the old Emperor Franz Joseph emerge from the cathedral to lead the procession in some religious ceremony or other. He was a tall slender old man with aristocratically small hands and feet and a quite remarkable lithe grace of carriage, but extraordinarily ugly. He was bareheaded and one got the full benefit of his coarse nose and long Hapsburg upper lip. His face was crimson and he kept turning his head from side to side in a manner that suggested nothing of the repose of kings. My companions remarked upon it.



'If it were not the Emperor,' observed the Consul, 'I should say that was a nervous man.' And later in the day we learned that he had been a nervous man indeed, for just before leaving the palace he had received a dispatch announcing the murders of the King and Queen of Serbia, and no doubt he was apprehensive of a stray bomb. He had little cause for fear, however. Stupid and bad old man that he was, his Austrian subjects adored him; no doubt from force of long habit.

I heard a good deal while in Vienna of the death of Crown Prince Rudolph, and saw his long bronze coffin in the Imperial crypt, where I intended to lay a scene of the story. The general belief seemed to be that his head had been bashed in at the Meyerling hunting lodge where he was in retreat with Marie Vetsera, but an Austrian officer told me that he had seen him when lying in state and there was but a narrow strip of court plaster across his forehead. The truth, probably, will never be known. I always thought that if ever there were a revolution in Austria and the archives disembowelled it would be given to the world, but the stories are still as contradictory as ever. Rudolph must have been as reckless as he was fascinating, for a former Chamberlain of the Court, whom I afterward met in London, told me that he would toss down a goblet of brandy and then one of champagne, proclaiming it his favourite tippie. But no one had an unhappier life.

I took the boat down the Danube from Vienna to Budapest, and although the greater part of the journey was monotonous, I was well rewarded by my first glimpse of the Hungarian capital at sunset. The palace, a vast and symmetrical pile of nearly a thousand rooms, crowned – over in Buda – the lower ridge of a mountain range, and on the most precipitous height were the ruins of an ancient citadel. On the opposite side of the Danube with its mighty bridges was the beautiful and quite modern city of Pest, although

the domed Parliament buildings, jutting out into the river, looked, in that soft evening glow, like an epitome of Venice.

Why the 'beautiful blue Danube'? It was mud-colour from Vienna to Budapest, and the Hungarians told me they had never seen it otherwise.

Pest was the most bustling city I had seen on the Continent, and reminded me of Chicago. It was also very advanced; a divorce could be procured in twenty-four hours. Every so often, for no apparent reason, law was suspended and then neither legal nor banking affairs were transacted. The city seemed none the worse for it, although while I was there the cabbies took advantage of one of these suspensions to refuse to make a bargain before starting out with a fare and then charging a week's board.

It was a very gay and animated city, the men and women almost as handsome as those of Vienna – where the very lackeys had both beauty and distinction – the cafés on either bank of the river were always crowded, and one heard the music of gipsy bands day and night. The fine equipages, the beautifully dressed women, the equally well-dressed men, the busy shops, the teeming streets, and a general air of newness about the buildings, all gave an air of great prosperity to Pest. Vienna was a stately brown city and far more interesting, but shabby and old-fashioned by contrast with this almost American town.

Whence came the legend that the toothpick is indigenous to the United States? I had always thought that 'The Great American Toothpick' would be a good title for the long-heralded Great American Novel. The American Consul, who was a Hungarian, invited me to his house for luncheon, and toothpicks – piled high on a plate – were passed round as a course! I had dined at few tables in Europe where they were not openly used, no matter what the rank of the host; and Mrs. Harris, who, of course, had attended state dinners at the Hofburg, the royal palace in Vienna, told me that not

only were toothpicks a part of the table decorations, but a small tumbler of mouthwash came in with the finger bowls! The longer I lived in Europe the firmer was my conclusion that the better class of Americans were the only people who had really fine table manners.

Every night, from a café opposite my window, I heard the music of the Chardash (this spelling is phonetic), beautiful, wailing, intoxicating. I was told that it was worth while to see it danced in one of the villages by peasants in their native costumes. But all the villages near Budapest were too civilized and if I wished to see this phase of Hungarian life I must take a day's journey. Travelling in a country where I didn't know a word of the language was not an alluring prospect, but as a scene comprising this village dance had sprung into my mind I decided to take the risk. My *Baedeker* informed me there was an hotel in Klausenburg named The New York, and in the innocence of my heart I assumed it was kept by an American. It was a through train. All I had to do was to get on, get off, and proceed to a friendly hotel. I was also told of the English wife of a Hungarian artist who lived in Klausenburg, and with these two consoling beacons I set forth.

Between Budapest and Klausenburg lies the Nagy-Alföld, the great plain of Hungary, upon which many bloody battles between Turks and Magyars had been fought in the past. But it was peaceful enough now. For miles there would not be an object on the green landscape but a goose-girl with her little flock of geese. At every station were groups of peasants in garments of snow-white wool panelled with black, and Orthodox Jews with startlingly red lips and bunches of blond curls, very greasy, on either side of their rather stupid faces.

Why that hotel in Klausenburg was called The New York I never knew. No one in it spoke anything but Hungarian, and they stared at me as if an American woman travelling

alone was one of the sights of the world. I doubt if being adrift on an iceberg gives one a more stranded feeling than when alone among a people of whose language you are as ignorant as they are of yours.

I felt I could not sleep that night until I had heard the English tongue once more. I wrote out the name of the Englishwoman I had heard of, and the clerk – no people are quicker of understanding than the Hungarians – put me in a cab and gave instructions to the driver. The Englishwoman, whose Hungarian name was Melka, was almost as glad to see me as I was to see her, for it was long since she had heard her own language spoken – save by her husband when he happened to be in the humour. She told me that I had timed my visit opportunely, for to-morrow would be a gala day in the nearest village, and if I would come with a carriage in the morning she and her husband would take me there. She wrote a note to the hotel manager asking him to hire the carriage and take care of me generally.

When I drove into the village on the following morning I was more impressed by the magnificent appearance of the peasants than even by the picturesque costumes of the men. Certainly they must be the finest race of peasants in Europe, and they looked intelligent, spirited, and proud. And very handsome. The women, despite their simple cotton frocks, were queenly, and the men in gay cloth or leathern jackets, bright sashes, loose white shirts and flapping white trousers embroidered with worsted or silk, looked like lords of creation and no king could rival them in distinction.

And nothing could exceed their politeness. The young lord of the village, in whose house the dance was to be held, escorted us into a large room, where the married people sat against the wall, and led us to a deep window-seat, assuring us of an uninterrupted view of the dance. Then he clapped his hands and the music began. For a time the Chardash is a wail of hopeless longing, and the feet and body move hesi-

tatingly, monotonously, the man holding the woman at arm's length; gradually it grows sweeter, more inspiring, and the feet move faster; life seems to awaken. The music swells and the man takes the girl's left hand and raises it high; then it becomes triumphant and peremptory; he swings her faster and faster, executes wild and rapid figures, stamps his feet, shouts, snaps his fingers in the air, increases his speed to that of the whirlwind, flings his partner from him, catches her again to whirl and whirl and whirl in a circle scarcely larger than her feet; and all without a moment of forgetfulness, a rude embrace, a change of expression. Not a foot was trodden, not a temper shaken. Much could be read into that wild dance. The reckless exhortation of the music expresses the insolent triumph of manhood; the woman alone hears the undertone of persistent sadness, the warning of the unfulfilment of mortal desire. When the man flings her from him she springs back automatically to his embrace. Such is her fate, however little there may be in it for her.

There was a period of rest, and then the music wailed again. The host approached us, bowed low, and addressed me in fluent Hungarian, a smile on his handsome face. Mrs. Melka translated an invitation to be his partner in the dance. I endeavoured to smile politely as I declined the honour, but I must have looked panic-stricken. He bowed again, chose another partner, but that I might feel quite at ease sent me, every few moments, an encouraging glance from his fine and rather flirtatious eyes.

Old Melka told me many interesting stories of Crown Prince Rudolph, who came every year to shoot with the Transylvania nobles. Melka always accompanied these parties, as he had a permanent commission to paint some incident of the royal visit. Those paintings hang in palaces and castles, but he had photographs of all of them and gave me three: the Crown Prince receiving the oak leaf dipped in the blood of his first bear; sitting with his friends about the

camp fire at night watching the wild dance of the gipsies; starting forth in the dawn for the hunt. (I framed those photographs and they always hang in whatever apartment I happen to be occupying.)

'Those were the grand times,' said the old man with a sigh, gazing sadly at the group about the camp fire. 'And one man was as good as another. First a prince and then a gipsy, then a prince, then a gipsy – and all drunk!'

During his last visit the Crown Prince had complained of violent headaches, and instead of his usual gay spirits had been so depressed that he cast a shadow over the party, causing his friends great uneasiness. When he left, instead of his customary *auf wiedersehen*, he had shaken hands unsmilingly and bade them 'good-bye.' When the news of his death came, with all its mysterious and contradictory details, they were convinced he had killed himself and had contemplated the act when he left them.

### I I I

WHEN I returned to Munich I took an apartment in the Kaulbach Strasse, and as my landlord was a cabinet-maker I bought from him some charming Gothic furniture he had copied from pieces in the museum. It was a bedroom set, and to reach my stately couch I had to climb a little flight of steps. I had brought with me an old-rose rug; I had the walls papered to match, and found an old-rose silken cover for the bed. It was a charming room and I was very glad to have it when I had the first illness of my life. The *salon* I furnished in a brighter shade of red, with bookcases, and some good pieces I found in the shops.

There were few lifts in Munich and I had to climb four flights of stairs, but from my windows I could see the Englischer Garten, one of the most interesting public parks

in Europe. I advertised for a 'housekeeper,' and was fortunate in finding at once a Swiss who spoke not only German but French, which was good for mine. Her name was Élise Palmert, and in her I found 'as faithful and devoted a servant as Rose had been to my mother. But she was far better educated than any servant ever was in the United States of America; or than many of one's friends, for that matter. She not only spoke three languages and correctly, but she was well-read in the classics of Germany, France, and Italy. She had a fierce temper and there was a legend in the neighbourhood that she carried a knife. Whenever she and my landlord – an extremely disagreeable man – met on the stairs they hissed and spat, and I had visions of getting her out of a German prison. I became an expert diplomatist dodging that temper, and to me she was always amiable. She took all household affairs off my hands and I never entered a provision shop during the six years I lived in Munich; she was a good cook, and the apartment fairly shone. As time went on I had guests frequently for luncheon and dinner, but when I asked her to get some one in to help her she would reply seriously, 'No, madame, I fear we should come to blows. I do not wish to kill anyone.' She made no friends – she had arrived in Bavaria but a week before she read my advertisement – and her only diversion was the bicycle. Élise, a tiny round hat perched on the top of her fuzzy untidy coiffure, a *loden* cape streaming behind her, a savage frown on her face, careering down the stately Ludwig Strasse, was one of the sights of Munich.

Munich was a dream city. There were five hundred thousand inhabitants, but no poverty, no slums. There were thirty royal palaces besides the Residenz, a great university and library, picture galleries famous throughout the world, and more art schools than in any other city in Europe. Situated on a high plateau in sight of the Alps, the air was so bracing one's feet felt winged, and the sky was the richest

blue I have ever seen, with low-lying masses of soft white clouds. The Bavarian uniform and flag were the same shade of blue – combined with white – and gave the final touch of harmony to that beautiful city. The Isar, that ran its tumultuous way through the park, born of glaciers and snow-fields, was beryl-green, and far more worthy to be commemorated in song than the Danube. It was a Catholic city, with handsome churches, and religious pictures were painted on many of the house-walls, shrines to the Virgin on street corners. Outside the town were factories, but, despite the fine shops, there was nothing to suggest business in the winding or stately streets of that leisurely town. One came to feel that we were all guests in a king's city, where art itself was king.

## I V

BUT its greatest attraction was the Hof-und-National Theatre, where the operas were sung. For a month or six weeks in the summer, when all the world came to Munich, there was a Wagnerfeste in the new Prinz-Regenten Theatre, very modern, very spacious, very handsome; but I preferred the Hof, open, but for those few weeks, all the year round. There one heard not only the Wagnerian operas – with the exception of *Parsifal*, to which Bayreuth clung greedily – but practically every opera ever written; even those of Offenbach, forgotten elsewhere. I was fortunate to live in Munich during one of the greatest periods of its operatic history. The incomparable Fassbender was the dramatic soprano, Moréna the lyric, Matzenauer the contralto, Bosetti the coloratura, Knote, Feinhals, Bender, tenor, baritone, and basso. The conductor was Felix Mottl, one of the finest in Europe, handsome and dignified also, which is more than can be said for most conductors. Maude Fay took Moréna's place later, and was a lovely Elizabeth, Elsa, and Sieglinde.



Fassbender not only had a golden voice, but was a greater actress than Bernhardt or Duse. To create the complete illusion in opera is an almost impossible feat, but Fassbender achieved it. She was the risen Isolde and Brünnehilde.

Moréna was very beautiful and had the only voluptuous soprano I ever heard, but, alas, her friends persuaded her that she would never be really great until she had a lover, and the poor thing had an unfortunate affair with an officer; he tired of her and she tried to drown herself in the Isar and had nervous prostration for a year. She returned to the stage but was never the same again. This is not pointing a moral: merely a bit of history. Fassbender's long affair with Mottl was as famous as her voice, and the only time either her singing or her acting was affected was when they had a quarrel and were estranged for several months.

I remember a circle of European friends surrounding Maude Fay one night and using every argument to induce her to have a secret illicit love affair and 'put colour in her voice.' But she had a keen American brain and was taking no chances. Moreover, she was a devout Catholic.

That old opera house had many historic associations. Ludwig I had reserved the box beside his own for Lola Montez, whose black flashing eyes were always challenging her enemies to do their worst. In the elevated royal box, facing the stage, Ludwig II, the 'Mad King,' had reclined in a darkened house, listening to the greatest of the Wagnerian operas, performed for him alone. He was a real king while he lasted!

One night while I was there a gala performance of *Lohengrin* was given for the King and Queen of Spain, who were paying a brief visit to the Bavarian royal family. As I entered the blue lights were burning all over the house. Knoté and Fay were to sing. Every woman in the fashionable *balkon* wore her best frock and jewels. The young Queen, very pretty with her fresh English complexion and

bright hair, played up by talking with great animation to her royal hostesses, but the King sat in the back of the box with Prince Ruprecht and played cards! We all cursed them heartily, for they were an hour late and the opera lasted until nearly midnight.

As a rule, beginning at half-past six or seven, it was over by ten, and I often walked the mile to my apartment down the broad Ludwig Strasse; but I not only was never spoken to, I never met any one. All Munich that was not at the opera was safely in bed at ten o'clock. And there was no crime that I ever heard of. When I first went there to live, Munich was still talking of a murder that had been committed eight years before, and was referring to it when I left; it was her one criminal sensation. The Bavarians were said to be the most brutal fighters in the World War, but they were peaceable – and stupid – ordinarily.

As it was a university town the streets and less fashionable restaurants were always full of students with their duel-scarred faces. I used to hear them under my windows at night trying to be riotous; but they were too well seasoned to be able to get really drunk, and the effort was rather comic. They were picturesque objects in their coloured caps, and so were the peasants who came in from the villages on Sundays and sauntered stolidly through the streets. At least the men were picturesque in their black and silver jackets and feathered Alpine hats, but the women wore flat little hats and ugly drab garments, and many of them were afflicted with goitre.

I had taken a letter to Baroness Cerrini, descended from an ancient Italian family that had moved to Saxony some two hundred years before, and now thoroughly *Deutsch*. She and her sister Mariette lived in a handsome apartment and as they entertained a good deal I met many of the Bavarian aristocracy, who were useful to me as types when I wrote *Tower of Ivory*. No two sisters were ever more unlike

than Baroness 'Steffie' and Baroness Mariette. The latter was an artist, was tall, rather handsome, dressed well, hated Society, and found her companions among other artists, to the utter disgust of her sister, who was the very epitome of conservatism – and German dowdiness. She was short, stout, shapeless, wore the most shocking clothes, and her grey hair in a tight little knot somewhere on the back of her head. Mariette was full of spirit, but Stephanie was very subdued; she had been Hof-dame – chief lady-in-waiting – to the old Duchess of Schleswig-Holstein (the Emperor's mother-in-law) for eighteen years, and that was enough to take the spirit out of any woman. Nevertheless, plain and suppressed, ill-clad, and undistinguished as she was, no one would ever mistake her for a member of the middle class. She might have had her individuality ironed out by eighteen years of living the life of what was little better than an upper servant to royalty, but she retained the awareness of being a Cerrini, and managed to have an 'air.'

Mariette was seldom in the apartment, and as Baroness 'Steffie' practically adopted me, I naturally saw far more of her than of her interesting sister; and despite her German sentimentality – which sometimes so got on my nerves that I would stamp my foot at her and exclaim: 'No! I don't love you! I like you well enough and you'll have to be content with that. And I never held a woman's hand in my life' – I really grew quite fond of her.

Muriel was highly amused when she was with me one summer. The King of Saxony paid a visit to Munich and as there were to be no women of the Court in his suite he had written to Baroness Cerrini to receive for him. It was to be a large afternoon reception an hour or so after his arrival, and she stopped in to see us on her way to the palace that had been placed at his disposal. Muriel, unlike Alece, could always repress even an acute desire to giggle, but her face was suspiciously red as she gazed wonderingly at that

quaint figure; and, indeed, it was difficult to realize that an hour later she would be standing beside a king and receiving the royalty and nobility of Munich. Her costume consisted of white wool coat and skirt – which ‘hiked up’ in front as she wore no corset – a cheap shirt waist and black ribbon tie, black shoes and white cotton stockings, and a small sailor hat perched high above her plump middle-aged face. But she was quite satisfied with her appearance, and I knew would be undaunted by the many fine costumes that would pass before the receiving-line. Dress to her meant nothing. To be a Cerrini was sufficient. I told her more than once what I thought of her clothes, her hats, her coiffure, but made no more impression than the oft-distracted Mariette. Nevertheless, I always reproached myself when I laughed at her, for no one was more sincere, loyal, and kind, and I never had a more devoted friend.

As soon as I had finished *Rulers of Kings* I went to London, intending to remain for several months. Élise went with me and I took a furnished apartment in a Westminster ‘Mansion’: a block of apartments – or flats, as they are called in England – around a court. As soon as I was settled I wrote a note to Mr. Bryce (he was not elevated to the peerage until some time later), and lunched with him in the course of the week.

Alas, that first impressions should be so ineradicable! I never think of that distinguished author and statesman that I do not see him shovelling tomato soup into first one wing of his white beard and then into the other, while his bright squinting little eyes were fixed cagerly on mine as I told him of my researches in the West Indies. I could see that Mrs. Bryce, dignified and conventional, was much disturbed, but

he was insensible to her admonitory frowns. He was a delightful old man and I liked him immensely but I have never been able to forget that red and white beard.

Several nights later they gave me a dinner, and there I met Lord Tennyson, son of the poet, and Governor-General of Australia. He was a gruff man and decidedly abrupt. I was talking with a group of people in the drawing-room after dinner when he stalked up to me and announced in a harsh voice: 'I've seen that your *Conqueror* is well circulated in Australia. Question of Federation is what interests us most at present. Thought you'd like to know this.' And stalked off.

Sir Charles Dilke was being discussed by the group I sat with, and I was interested to learn that the horrid scandal which had driven the ablest man in British public life into comparative obscurity was now generally believed to have been the result of a conspiracy, what we in the United States would call a 'plant.' But although he was once more a Member of Parliament, he could never be Prime Minister nor even one of a Cabinet, for the moment he aspired too high that old scandal would be revived, not only by his enemies but by the strait-laced middle class, which never could be made to understand that a man's private life has nothing whatever to do with his usefulness to the State. All or nothing was their motto.

I met Lady Dilke somewhere and dined one night at their house. Sir Charles was a big man with a grey beard and anything but agreeable in manner. He disliked Americans, and, I suppose, being in an unusually bad humour, it amused him to bait me. I stood it for some time, conceding that he had every right to be embittered and remembering that the American Press had treated him with exceeding vileness, but finally I had enough of it and turned on him sharply. After that his manners improved. 'I was determined to get a rise out of you,' he said later, almost – not quite – apologetically.

‘Yes, you did,’ I replied. ‘But I’ll stand just so much rudeness from a host and no more.’

One of the guests that night was the only large fat Japanese I have ever seen. He was a special envoy to England for some reason or other, and it was evident that the diplomacy of Nippon was not modelled on the school of Talleyrand, which talked and said nothing. He barely opened his mouth. I saw poor Lady Dilke struggling with him throughout dinner. Afterward, when we had gone upstairs, he chose the largest chair and planted himself in the middle of the drawing-room, and sat there looking like a fat brooding Buddha. Lady Dilke asked me if I wouldn’t have a try at him. I talked to him about Japanese in California, but he merely blinked at me. Being an American I felt no call to be diplomatic and asked him outright if there was likely to be war between Japan and Russia. He didn’t even blink; he stared straight through me. For a long half hour I did my duty by my hostess, and then she rescued me and turned me over to Henry Norman, who, being an admirer of my books, I found quite charming. He was a distinguished author and traveller, and it is to him that we owe the public agitation for the national preservation of Niagara Falls, and their subsequent purchase by the State of New York.

## V I

I WAS not much impressed by the first duchess I met.

William Henry Wilkins, author of several clever biographies, whom I had met in Copenhagen, gave me a tea at his rooms and there I met Mrs. Poynter, a sister of the Duchess of Somerset. A few days later she too gave me a tea, and was beaming when I arrived. ‘My sister is coming,’ she said, ‘and will bring her famous autograph album; she wants you to copy something from *The Conqueror* into it.’

She expected me to be duly impressed and I put on the correct expression.

The duchess arrived. She was preceded up the stairs by a footman in livery bearing an immense volume bound in shining green morocco. In her own ducal hand she carried a copy of *The Conqueror*. The footman deposited the album on the piano and retired. I was presented to the duchess with great *empressement*, and asked, rather peremptorily, in a strong North country accent, if I would be kind enough to autograph a quotation from *The Conqueror*. I replied I should be delighted. Mrs. Poynter produced pen and ink. The duchess escorted me to the piano, I asked her if she had any suggestion to make, any line she preferred. She opened the book and pointed to a quotation from Talleyrand on the title page. 'If you will copy out that,' she said with a gracious smile. 'It's wonderful, ain't it?'

And without the flicker of an eyelash I copied and autographed the only thing in the book I hadn't written.

Mrs. Poynter was one of the nicest women possible, and herself quite unassuming; it struck me as rather pitiful, the awe and admiration in which she held a sister who was her inferior in everything but rank. But rank means so much in England (or did) that I suppose having a sister suddenly elevated to the highest place in the peerage was like some wild middle-class dream come true, and she was bound to regard the family duchess as the darling of the gods.

I met Lady Hamilton, wife of Sir Ian, at that tea and she called on the following day. It was at her house that I passed one of the most uncomfortable hours of my life.

One of the delightful things about London Society was that at luncheons there were always as many men as women. I like women well enough, but individually, not *en masse*; gossip is interesting when one is in the humour, but not a steady flow of chatter about bridge, dress, personalities and reducing; if there are men present, the talk, either

general or with one's neighbour, is likely to be more intelligent.

Lady Hamilton asked me to luncheon, and as I knew that anyone so clever as she was must know interesting men I went to her house full of pleasurable anticipation.

I was late and the drawing-room was already full. A tall imposing man who looked to be prematurely grey was standing on the hearth-rug holding forth to a circle on some political question. I thought he looked vaguely familiar, and saw a peculiar light come into his eyes, but forgot him a second later, as Lady Hamilton, in the usual vague English fashion, murmured a few names. When we were seated at table I said to the man on my right: 'I hardly know anyone here; will you tell me their names? I caught a few, but don't know to whom to attach them – except that that big man opposite, who looks, curiously enough, like an American politician, is Lord Elphinstone, and I believe the one on my left is Colonel Frank Rhodes.'

'No,' he said. 'I am Elphinstone. The man opposite is an American, and his name is White.'

'Then he is a politician?' I thought so.'

'Well, hardly that. He is Henry White, First Secretary of your Embassy.'

'Oh, my God!' I muttered. 'Do you think I could get under the table?'

Englishmen have their sense of humour but it is not ours, and he asked me seriously if I had dropped something valuable. If I had, wouldn't it be better to wait until luncheon was over when it could be rescued by the butler? It was surely quite safe meanwhile. I made no attempt to confide in him and turned to my left-hand neighbour with whom, at least, I could talk about Cecil Rhodes – now dead, alas!

Colonel Rhodes was a man of much liveliness of mind, and I kept him talking until that interminable meal was over, my eyes carefully avoiding the other side of the table. As



soon as we adjourned to the drawing-room I intended to make polite excuses and an unobtrusive exit. No doubt if I had recognized Henry White when I entered I should have been taken suddenly ill and retired, but his hair was black when I met him several years before, and he had been thinner in face and figure. In the immensity of London Society I had hoped to avoid him and had carefully refrained from calling at the Embassy.

But the moment we were in the drawing-room he stalked me down and shepherded me into a corner. I must have looked appealing and on the verge of tears, for he smiled kindly. 'No,' he said, 'I am not going to scold you. I knew those Danes had got hold of you and worked on your sympathies, and you naturally believed them. (A polite way of saying that I hadn't known what I was writing about.) Now, I am going to tell you my side of the story.'

And he did. And then proceeded to heap coals of fire on my head by saying pleasant things about my novels, and how proud he was that such a book as *The Conqueror* had been written by an American woman. All the English statesmen were reading it, he told me, and Joseph Chamberlain had mentioned it in one of his speeches on Federation. Needless to say, he made a friend of me for life.

## V I I

HE called a day or two later and said he would like to give me a dinner. Was there any one I wanted particularly to meet? I told him I hadn't met Edmund Gosse, and he said he would ask him and any other celebrities he could drum up on short notice. The only disengaged evening either of us had for a month was a week hence.

A singular thing happened at that dinner. It might have had international results, but so far as I know it did not.

An English and Continental custom to which an American woman can never become quite reconciled is that when she is the guest of honour the host does not take her in if there are women of title present. The Bernstorffs were guests at this dinner and Mr. White took in the countess, while Bernstorff, then First Secretary of the German Embassy, sat opposite in the table's length with Miss White. (Mrs. White was an invalid.) I was placed at the head of the table with Edmund Gosse, and Abbey and Sir George Trevelyan (nephew of Macaulay and the author of several distinguished works) were close by. There was something over thirty people at that dinner, fashionable, literary, artistic, as well as an American general, and an attaché of the Russian Embassy, who had just arrived in London. He was a small black-bearded young man who had attracted my attention by his curious pallor and extremely stilted carriage; he walked jerkily as if propelled by springs.

I suppose I should be able to quote some brilliant *mot*, epigram, aphorism, of that renowned conversationist, Edmund Gosse, but, alas, I am not! Perhaps he uttered so many witticisms that I mixed them up, or perhaps they were driven from my mind by the singular occurrence I have alluded to. I only remember that he was very gay and boyish, and that I was enjoying myself hugely, not only with him but with Sir George Trevelyan and Abbey, also in high good humour, when some one whispered excitedly: 'Don't look! Don't look!' and of course we all looked to see where we mustn't look.

The Russian, his face now of a greenish pallor, his eyes closed, his mouth sagging open, was slumped down in his chair, while Mr. White and the butler were endeavouring to lift him, in order, no doubt, to remove him from the scene as hastily as possible. It was an awkward performance and the American general called from the other side of the table: 'Carry him out in the chair!' Whereupon two

footmen lifted the chair and departed with their unseemly burden.

The only thing I could think of was if that man were dead my dinner would be ruined, for no doubt we would all be sent home. But Mr. White resumed his seat and his conversation with Countess Bernstorff as if nothing had happened, and at our end of the table we began to talk with greater animation than ever. The catastrophe was not alluded to; there was a tacit understanding to ignore it.

The dinner finished, the ladies left for the drawing-room. As we were descending the stairs, Miss White exclaimed: 'That poor man! He is in the library and I do hope the servants are looking after him. He seemed so dreadfully ill.'

'Ill!' said Countess Bernstorff. 'Ill! He's drunk. He came drunk, and the first glass he took in that warm room was the last straw. He ought to be thrown out into the street.'

'Oh,' said Miss White faintly. 'Oh! I hope not.' Being the daughter of a diplomat she looked worried. There were strained relations in Europe at that time and it was not a pleasant thing to happen in the house of a member of any embassy.

'I am sure none of us will ever mention it,' I said, with a side glance at the German countess. 'But what of the men? All the gossip comes out of men's clubs.'

The next day, however, I met Sir George Trevelyan on the street and he told me there had been an agreement in the smoking room to keep the unfortunate incident a profound secret; and, so far as I know, a secret it was kept. I never heard an allusion to it. When I returned to Munich I thought it safe to confide in Reginald Tower, the British Minister to Bavaria, who was a friend of mine and knew how to hold his tongue. And then he surprised me by exclaiming: 'That explains it! He came here to the Russian Legation, left a card on every member of the diplomatic corps, and then disappeared from public view. He was pun-

ished by demotion, of course – some one told on him! Odd, that the dinner was given to you and the sinner exiled to your home town, so to speak.’

## V I I I

I MET Henry James during that spring for the third and last time. It was at a luncheon at the house of Sidney Lee, the Shakespearean scholar, who lived in Lexham Gardens, Kensington. All the guests were intellectuals, but I remember none but Henry James, who filled the eye as well as the ear. He talked all the time, talked coherently, brilliantly, illuminatingly. Nobody wanted to listen to anyone else, and if a pause threatened he was gently prodded. Alas, that I should have forgotten what he talked about!

When the party broke up he offered to drive me back to Westminster, and I cursed my fate and the woman who was calling to take me to Richmond for tea.

Until this visit to London I had not read Henry James for years. I didn’t like the books of his second period: his *Princess Casamassima*, *Spoils of Poynton*, *The Tragic Muse*, *The Sacred Fount*; I had been unable to read any of them through. They were dull; he had lost his light touch.

At Mr. White’s dinner I expressed this opinion to Edmund Gosse and he replied peremptorily: ‘Oh, but you must read his later novels. He has entered upon his period of real greatness. *The Ambassadors* is his last. Get it to-morrow and read it.’

I did, and then I read all the others: *What Maisie Knew*, *The Other House*, *The Two Magics* (surely *The Turn of the Screw* is the most horrifying ghost story ever written!), *The Golden Bowl*, *The Wings of the Dove* – which still seems to me one of the greatest novels in the history of fiction.

I had arranged with Macmillan & Company, my current

publishers, to bring out a volume of short stories in the following year; it was to include those I had written some years before and published in *Vanity Fair*, *The Striding Place*, one laid in Pont Aven, the tale that had appeared in *The Anglo-Saxon Review*, and several others.

A day or two after the luncheon at Sidney Lee's I wrote Henry James asking if I might dedicate that book to him. Of course I expressed my unbounded admiration for his work, and told him also that I had been much under his influence when I began to write but had withdrawn, not only because I didn't care to imitate anyone but because I had come to realize that it was a sort of theft and cheapened the idol's glory rather than enhanced it.

His reply was rather pathetic, none too well expressed, and written in a hand that caused me hours of agony.

'Reform Club,  
Pall Mall, S.W.

April 25th, 1904

'DEAR MRS. ATHERTON:

'It would give me great pleasure that you should dedicate a book to me—if you should see your way, in your own "interest," to doing anything so inauspicious as to invoke my presence in respect to the popularity of the outcome. May my name, I mean, contribute to bring your work better fortune than it usually contributes to bring mine. I am greatly obliged to you at any rate for your so friendly appreciation of my good influence, or [illegible] I may call it in the past. Such assurances give one a lift, send back echoes of one's voice, and make me feel at all events,

Yours most truly,

HENRY JAMES.'

He had lost his large public during his second phase and was little read now save by intellectuals, who never supported anybody. Fortunately he had a private income.

I never could understand the point of that witticism (*sic*) apropos his three manners: James the First, James the Second, and James the Pretender. In his first period he showed a distinguished talent; in the second aridity descended upon him; but in the third he surely gave the world the genius that was in him. And who are his rivals? The Pretenders are those that try to imitate him. Really great critics like Edmund Gosse have set their seal upon him, and if there are any thinking critics to-day comparable with that distinguished galaxy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and not wholly warped by middle-class ideology, they hardly can fail to agree with them.

In the course of the year I wrote a long short story of which Henry James was the hero and called it *The Bell in the Fog*; and this title I gave to the volume of short stories I had asked permission to dedicate to him.

## I X

DURING my long residence in Munich I returned to the United States every other year, partly for family reasons – I spent the greater part of the time in California – partly because I had no intention of becoming an expatriate and getting out of touch. I had observed that American writers who lived abroad permanently, but continued to write about America, lost the accent. On alternate years, when not writing, I travelled or went to London for the season.

Lady Jeune, afterward Lady St. Helier, was one of the famous hostesses of England. Unkind persons called her Mrs. Leo Hunter, and one certainly met every sort of celebrity at her house. Would there were more hostesses like her. Assuredly 'mixed' parties, where every guest save the merely fashionable stood for something, were more amusing than where the line was so severely drawn that all called one

another 'Bertie,' 'Reggie,' 'Vi,' and discussed the same old familiar subjects. I never attended a dull party at her house.

Lady Jeune, whose husband, Sir Francis, was a K.C.B., President of Probate, Divorce, and Admiralty Division, Privy Councillor, and Judge Advocate-General, possibly the most famous legal light in Great Britain, was a small woman, with a charming smile, a warm hospitable manner, and always looked serene, even if she had inadvertently asked deadly enemies to sit at the same table. Her dress had the simplicity of her manners and she wore no jewels save on State occasions. One secret of her popularity as a hostess may have been that she had a good cook. One never got anything fit to eat at an English dinner unless an imported chef was in the kitchen. Like all accomplished hostesses she seemed to make no effort. You might be invited the day before to one of her large dinners or luncheons – having just arrived and made yourself known; another man would be found, other places made; two extra guests meant nothing to her, although there might already be forty on her list.

I had never happened to meet her, but she called on me shortly after I came from Munich the second time, and I went constantly to her house in Harley Street.

One night I arrived rather late at one of her dinners, and my attention was immediately attracted by a woman standing alone by the hearth: the other women were grouped together on the opposite side of the room and evidently discussing her. She was rather tall, slender, very smartly gowned in black, and remarkably striking in appearance. Her skin had the white translucence of alabaster; the only colour in her face was in the lips of a well-formed mouth. An immense amount of blood-red hair was wound about her head in massive braids, and small dark-green eyes with thick short black lashes gave the final touch to a countenance of singular individuality.

I wondered who she could be, but had no time to ask, for we went down at once to the dining-room.

As I have intimated, at these large London dinners the host and hostess sat in the centre of the table's length. My seat to-night was at the head of the table with an agreeable man whose name I have ungratefully forgotten, and I had a full view of the guests on either side. It was an interesting gathering. The Prime Minister, Arthur Balfour, and the Duke of Marlborough sat on either side of Lady Jeune. Other guests that I remember were Campbell-Bannerman, George Wyndham, the Duchess of Marlborough – a beautiful creature and very much the rage – A. E. W. Mason, Archdeacon and Mrs. Wilberforce, John Morley, Lord and Lady Dillon, Sir Philip Burne-Jones, and our own Pierpont Morgan. The latter's immense red distorted nose was so famous that there is no indelicacy in mentioning it. He was talking with great animation to the handsome woman beside him and it seemed to get into the way of speech, for every few minutes he would give it an impatient shove with his forefinger – and then glare about him. As I was but twice removed and seated where I hardly could fail to observe him, I received the full benefit of his glares.

Far down on one side of the table I caught sight of the lady with the alabaster skin and blood-red braids and asked my companion if he could tell me who she was. He was a Scot and expressed himself with more enthusiasm than an Englishman would on any occasion.

'Ah!' he exclaimed. 'Isn't she wonderful-looking? Doesn't she look like a poisoner – one of the Borgias? Her name is Elinor Glyn, and she wrote *The Visits of Elizabeth* that had such a vogue.'

I well remembered *The Visits of Elizabeth*, a very naughty, very clever novel giving startling side-lights on country-house life in England. In it she had invented the word 'boring,' just as years later she gave 'It' to a receptive



world. That book came out at the same time as *The Aristocrats*, and I remembered being rather jealous, as it far out-distanced mine in sales. Nevertheless, I had enjoyed it, and was glad of the opportunity to meet her.

I always regretted that I met Mr. Balfour so occasionally and casually, for he was one of the most charming of men. But at a dinner he sat beside the hostess with some woman of title on his other hand, and always left early to go to the House or a Cabinet meeting. He left to-night before the savoury, and stopped beside me for a moment's talk. If he was always in a hurry he never seemed to be; his manner was leisurely, almost indolent, but wholly without arrogance. He was very tall, very thin, rather angular, not handsome, but with a face as pleasant as it was intelligent. What he said that night I do not remember, but he always left one feeling that no cares of State were too heavy to make him forget any woman he had happened to meet. He would have made an ideal ambassador at some nervous court.

When we left the men and went upstairs to the drawing-room, Mrs. Glyn once more retired to the hearth and sat talking to Lady Jeune. The others surrounded me and eagerly seconded Mrs. Campbell-Bannerman's request that I would go over and talk to Elinor Glyn and then return and tell them what she had on her face. No skin was ever as white as that. For some reason – doubtless because she had given away too many aristocratic secrets in her book – they wouldn't meet her themselves. 'But you are an American,' one of them exclaimed (a polite way of saying that I was an outsider), 'and an author yourself, so you won't mind?'

'I'd like to meet her immensely,' I replied, and crossed the room. Lady Jeune gave me a grateful look, and resigned her chair. I found Mrs. Glyn charming, as I always have since, and we exchanged mutual compliments for some time. But those other women were beckoning to me with their eyes, and as the men entered I returned to them.

'Now! What is it! What is it?' they exclaimed in unison. 'Tell us quickly. We've only a minute.'

'There's nothing on her skin,' I assured them. 'Not even a light coat of powder. It really is like alabaster. You can see down into it.'

'Oh!' a chorus of bitter disappointment. 'You're just being loyal because she's a sister-writer.' And despite my protests they wouldn't believe me.

Elinor Glyn had her revenge. She was surrounded by a solid block of men for the rest of the evening.

## X

THE Wilberforces took me one night to a public dinner where it was hoped money would be raised for some charity in which they were interested. The Duke of Marlborough was in the chair and it was his duty to make the speech of the evening. It was a very bad speech and I thought he would tear his hands out by the roots. He told us afterwards that he didn't mind making a speech when he knew what he was talking about but the thing had been sprung on him the night before.

William Ashmead-Bartlett-Burdett-Coutts sat on the other side of me. Twenty-three years before he had married the famous philanthropic baroness when he was thirty and she had attained the ripe age of sixty-seven. He had been her secretary, and the story went that she married him in order to give him a legal right to a substantial share of her immense fortune, and confound expectant and grasping relatives. But women of ripe age have been known to marry young men for less philanthropic reasons.

He was a large vigorous good-looking man who must have been handsome when he was an impecunious young secretary. As far as the world knew he was a loyal and devoted

husband; he also was a man of some ability and had made a name for himself.

He said to me in effect: 'Being an American and novelist no doubt you are interested in all our human curios. Will you come to lunch one day and meet my wife?' I told him I should like nothing better, for the baroness was world-famous quite aside from her sensational marriage. Not that I added this. A date was arranged then and there.

They lived in one of the historic houses in Piccadilly; and at the top of the stairs was a full-length painting of Count d'Orsay, the friend of Byron's Lady Blessington. As the baroness was born in 1814, one assumed that he had been a friend of hers also. I seemed to be walking straight into the past.

Ashmead-Bartlett (as he was generally known despite the extension he had assumed upon marriage) received me at the door of a large sombre pre-Victorian drawing-room, and a little old lady, whose fragile body described an acute angle, rose from her seat by the fire, and leaning on a cane came forward and greeted me with a charming old-time graciousness. Most of the great ladies of England were rather abrupt in manner and inclined to a watchful reticence when greeting a stranger; although they often thawed later and were disconcertingly frank about their private affairs. But this aged relic of a more leisurely and protected past was friendly at once. She was over ninety, and her voice very weak, but her eyes were bright and her ears sharp. At table she talked constantly and told me of the great singers of her youth, Mario and Grisi, with whom Jean de Reszke and Melba were not to be compared! She had heard Patti at her début and Nilsson in her prime, and was much interested when I told her that I had heard Patti in far-off California, and had also met her and been astonished at her raucous voice in speaking. She also related incidents of Queen Victoria's youth, and talked of the Prince Consort, Palmer-

ston, Gladstone and Disraeli. The Prince Consort, who was an economical German, sold what was left of the candles when guests had departed from Windsor or Balmoral! A pity she left no memoirs, for she talked well and had a sense of humour.

When we returned to the drawing-room her husband said playfully: 'Now, run along to your room and lie down. You have talked enough for one day.' She smiled, shrugged, gave me a claw-like hand, and ambled off with the docility of a little girl obeying her elder brother. She lived to be ninety-two and was buried with pomp in Westminster Abbey.

## X I

E. F. BENSON in his delightful memoir, *As We Were*, gives an accurate and none too flattering picture of the Marchioness of Londonderry. She was one of a galaxy of famous hostesses, but must have owed more to the great distinction of her husband than to any charm or talent of her own. She had none of the simplicity, the apparent lack of birth-consciousness of other Englishwomen born to great position; whose abruptness was largely due to national shyness. Lady Londonderry was anything but shy, and looked as hard as the proverbial nail. She was a short rather squat woman with hard black eyes, and at a small luncheon where I met her she bombarded me with impertinent questions. (What are Americans, anyhow? was her attitude.) I grew more reticent and abrupt than the English at their best, and she liked me as little as I liked her. She didn't strike me as being much of an improvement on the Duchess of Somerset, although she was a daughter of the nineteenth Earl of Shrewsbury.

That luncheon was made memorable to me by the presence of a woman of far different calibre. She sat opposite me,

and I don't think uttered half a dozen sentences during the hour at table. She was a woman of middle-age, dowdily dressed, with the remains of beauty in her profoundly melancholy face. A more withdrawn, chilly, indifferent personality I never encountered.

While I was heading off Lady Londonderry (among other things she wanted to know if I was a divorcée; being a Californian I should be if I wasn't) I recalled what I had heard a few days since of this woman's tragic history. The British Peerage is full of strange romances and tragedies, and hers was one of the strangest and saddest.

When young she had been a cold and heartless beauty, an authentic Ouida type. Ouida, I may say here, although accused of 'over-drawing,' knew her English aristocrats, and I met her types everywhere; even her famous guardsmen must have been true to life, for those of my time were exactly as she described them. And her last novel, *The Massarenes*, was an accurate picture of London Society in certain of its phases during the 'nineties.

But to return to Lady A., as I must call her; unfortunately I have forgotten her name. In a moment of caprice she married a gallant young officer who worshipped her. People wondered if she had married only to torment him, for she treated him with such unrelenting coldness and cruelty that war in South Africa came as a godsend. This was some time during the 'eighties.

He lost his life. A year or two later she married Lord A., and although still the remote haughty beauty, incapable of love, he was of a more philosophic turn and ran off to no wars in search of Nirvana. How she managed to have two children was one of the mysteries.

A few years after her second marriage it occurred to someone to write a life of her first husband, who had served his country with such initiative and daring that he had become the most distinguished officer in his division.

Lady A. was approached for any letters and papers he may have left. At first she refused to be bothered; she permitted no one to bother her about anything. Finally, however, she succumbed – not through amiability but vanity; after all, the man whom she had almost forgotten had been her husband, and a life of him by an ardent admirer would add another rim to her already blinding halo.

All his papers had been thrown into a trunk sent back from Africa after his death, and she determined to go through them herself; she had never written him a line, but other women may have been indiscreet and it was well his own halo should remain intact.

The trunk had been carried with her other belongings to her present stately mansion and reposed in the attic. For some reason, instead of having it brought downstairs she chose to go up to the attic and investigate the contents there.

As he had lived the life of a soldier there were few papers of any importance, although many medals – among them the Victoria Cross. But she came across a large packet of letters, and, to her amazement, saw that they were addressed to her in her young husband's handwriting. They were unstamped; it looked as if he had had no intention of mailing them.

If she was incapable of love she had her share of feminine curiosity. She read them. They had been written on the ship that took his regiment to South Africa, and at the seat of war. The last was dated a day or two before his death in battle.

Those letters were the outpourings of a lofty and ardent soul doomed to eternal loneliness, pulsating with a love so passionate, selfless, hopeless, so unrestrained in the certainty that the woman to whom they were addressed would never see them while he was still on earth that the man himself seemed to come alive and stand there before her in all the ardour of his youth.

And as she sat there in the dust and silence and semi-darkness of the attic, those letters of fire in her hands, an invisible presence almost at one with her, the strangest thing happened that ever metamorphosed the soul of a woman. The ice melted. She fell profoundly and irrevocably in love with a dead man. She sat there for hours, weeping bitter tears as she meditated on what she had wantonly thrust out of her life, dreaming of what might have been, longing for death that they might be reunited.

Her defences were down. She felt she never could face the world again as the proudest and coldest woman in England. To go on living with her present husband was unthinkable. She left the attic a broken woman. Left Lord A's house and went into seclusion where she could live with those letters and such poor memories as she had. And in seclusion she remained for several years. It was only when her family, incapable of understanding and regarding her as a romantic idiot, succeeded in persuading her that she had the children she had borne and the husband she had voluntarily married to consider, that she renounced the luxury of uninterrupted grief and returned to the world.

But if she had been frozen before she was now little better than dead. Her beauty was gone; her youth had died in the attic. She was the shell of a great lady and moved in Society an automaton. Her story was perfectly well known; all London Society knows one another's secrets; and Agnes and Egerton Castle took it as the theme for their novel: *Rose of the World*.

There was no doubt in my mind as she sat there on the other side of the table, her eyes cast down, barely speaking, not caring in the least whether she were rude or not, that she was dwelling in ghostly marriage with the dead.

She had addressed only one or two perfunctory remarks to me, and I had doubted if she were really aware of my presence. What was my surprise, therefore, on the following

day to receive one of her cards and a note inviting me to dinner on Sunday a fortnight hence.

I had met no one in London who interested me more, and although I had an engagement for that night I broke it unscrupulously.

The house was in Piccadilly. I arrived rather late. 'I have the vice of promptness but had learned to be late in London, for if I were not, someone else was, and dinner was served nearer to nine than half-past eight. As was common in so many London houses, the dining-room was on the ground floor, and the guests were received in the room behind; one did not go up to the drawing-room until later.

The room was full. My name was bawled out. I glanced about hastily. No Lady A. Those houses in Piccadilly were so much alike, had I got into the wrong one by mistake? I was beginning to feel extremely uncomfortable when a young woman came forward smiling. 'Lady A. is so sorry not to be able to receive you,' she said almost casually, 'but she had an operation for appendicitis this morning. I am her daughter-in-law.'

I was under the impression that I uttered the usual banality: 'So sorry,' while thoroughly taken aback by this evidence of a super-civilization that would not cast expectant guests adrift on a Sunday evening to dine in a restaurant – the servants, no doubt, having taken the night off – even though the hostess might be dying upstairs. But I was told afterward that I comforted the family greatly by waving my hand and exclaiming airily: 'Oh, that is nothing! Everybody in America has appendicitis.' I hadn't the vaguest remembrance of it.

Much to my regret I never saw her again.



## XII

I STILL went frequently to the Corkrans'. Miss Alice and Henriette looked exactly the same as ever – they might indeed have been wearing the same clothes – but Mr. Whiteing's hair and beard had blanched. In compensation he had made his début as a novelist and achieved a considerable success with *Number 5 John Street* – and another story whose title I have forgotten. He wrote with some distinction, but had an irritating habit of using the word 'shape' for 'figure' or 'form.' 'He sought to clasp her shape' sounded rather queer.

One night I met at dinner there a little, bowed, snuffy, shabby, rather dirty old man whose name was Theodore Watts-Dunton. He was all a-twitter because he had written a novel of Romany life that had been praised by some critics and sold a few copies.

I had never heard of the man, but upstairs in the library when the others were grouped about the fire Henriette led me to the end of the room and enlightened me in her usual caustic fashion.

'He is a conceited ass,' she said, hardly deigning to lower her voice. 'And he's been the ruin of Swinburne. Algernon was too fond of the bottle, poor dear, and that misbegotten fool over there took it into his head to reform him. How he managed to work on Swinburne no one knows, but he did, and buried him alive in Putney! The poor devil hasn't had a drop to drink for twenty-five years! And what is the result? He hasn't written a line worth reading since he stopped. If he couldn't write great poetry except under the stimulation of liquor he should have been permitted to drink himself to death a few years earlier if meanwhile he could give more great poems to the world – after all, the world has the first lien on a genius; how he destroys his body or even his soul doesn't matter. What is his life now? Life!

Mere existence dragged out in the sole company of that little object over there, who has scared all Swinburne's old friends off. Swinburne never goes anywhere – Watts-Dunton won't let him – and they won't go to Putney with that man hanging round and listening to every word. Swinburne is almost forgotten – and for what!'

I fully agreed with her, and at the same time felt the germ of an idea moving about in my head. It came to birth a year or two later in *The Gorgeous Isle*. (I may say here – and I make no apology for being egotistical; what is a biography if it isn't egotistical? – that it was owing to this novelette as well as to *The Conqueror* that Bath House on Nevis was rebuilt.)

One has only to read the *Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse* by Charteris to see what he and others thought of Watts-Dunton; who, it is to be hoped, is frying on a grid-iron in hell.

Richard Le Gallienne, who is an incomparable raconteur, tells many amusing stories of that household at Putney, and assuredly he will some day write his memoirs. According to him, the time came when Swinburne learned to dodge his captor and visit the local 'pub,' and, in due course, acquired a very red nose. But by then his genius was withered and dead.

### X I I I

CRITICS are quaint creatures. There seems to be no standard and the wonder is they have any influence. When *The Bell in the Fog* was published each of the ten stories was singled out by ten different critics for praise and the others virtually ignored. And after the publication of *Rulers of Kings* I had had cause to speculate upon just how far the public was influenced by critics, favourable or otherwise. On the day of its appearance it had a column review in

every morning and evening newspaper in London (save *The Times*, whose book reviews appeared in the *Literary Supplement*), and for two weeks thereafter every one I met asked me when my new book was coming out. But of course there was a vast circle of readers outside of London Society, which was presumably too busy to read book reviews during the season.

It is not to be imagined that all my books were equally well received by the British critics and public. *A Daughter of the Vine*, was almost universally denounced, and the prisoners in a northern retreat burned it publicly in the prison yard. Drink was not a favoured subject in the British Isles, nor at that time did they like too much tragedy in their fiction, not even the intellectuals. Only two newspapers wrote anything that could be quoted by a despairing publisher. I find the following in the back of *Senator North*: 'Touches and passages in *A Daughter of the Vine*, turn by turn, entitle it to a place beside *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. Yet, externally, if not essentially, it is as characteristically Californian as they are English' - *The Criterion*. (Queer ways the critics have of expressing themselves sometimes.) And from *The Yorkshire Post*: 'Were there no other work by which to judge her, the author would leave us, with this book, looking round among the woman writers of the world for one stronger, clearer, more absolutely sane. She is only to be read by people of ripe intelligence, reading because the proper study of mankind is man.'

It was the disgruntled critic of the *Academy*, however, who gave me one of my best titles. 'Why,' he asked plaintively, 'doesn't Mrs. Atherton give us more stories of the splendid idle 'forties, instead of harrowing us with the hateful picture of a female drunkard?' I was about to bring out a new edition of the Old California tales, hitherto published under the title *Before the Gringo Came*, and renamed it *The Splendid Idle 'Forties*.

That book had quite a sale in England, to whom far-off California was then perhaps the most glamorous of lands; and apropos of that fact I had an amusing experience after I published *Ancestors* in 1907. A part of the scene is laid in San Francisco, and I had dwelt lingeringly on the fogs of that city, one of its most picturesque attributes. As I wrote the California part in Munich, distance lent enchantment, and I no doubt dwelt on them unduly, as well as on the winds and dust storms which were a part of the city's individuality.

I went one Sunday to luncheon at the house of Mr. Cobden-Sanderson, who had followed in the footsteps of William Morris as a master printer and binder. It was a small family luncheon and the only other guest was an English novelist who had married a foreign count. Of course she sat on Mr. Cobden-Sanderson's right, and although I was on his left she monopolized him completely. I had one of his agreeable sons on my other side, and although I was fond of the old man I was not discontented.

When the luncheon was over the countess and I arrived simultaneously at the door. There was an instant's hesitation, although she looked haughty. Then I hastily reflected that her title didn't amount to much, and all American women were princesses anyhow, and calmly preceded her.

In the drawing-room a few moments later I was talking with my host and his sons while she was forced to content herself with Mrs. Cobden-Sanderson and two other women of the family. I suppose this was one indignity too much and not to be borne; she rose and walked across to me.

'Do you know,' she announced in a high clear voice, 'I always longed to see California until I read your books? But you've made it seem such a dreary place I no longer have the slightest desire to go there.'

I heard our host gasp, and replied sweetly: 'I am afraid you have read only what I have written about San Fran-

cisco. I assure you there is perpetual sunshine in the south.'

Such are the amenities of authors.

I made several enemies among the 'lady-novelists' of England. One, whose father had made a fortune in trade, owned a literary weekly in which she took care I should be constantly slammed. She even turned her back on me pointedly one night when she was receiving with the hostess at a literary party, and tried to blackball me at a club. She had been born in the United States, although English by upbringing, and until I appeared had been the only American pebble on the literary beach. She always rises in my memory with eyes like daggers above an elevated pug. It is never wise for an imported American to ape English rudeness. It takes a great lady to know how to be rude and not look like a housemaid in a temper.

#### XIV

I THINK it was during that second season I spent in London while living in Munich that I met Lady Randolph Churchill; she was Mrs. Cornwallis West at that time, but resumed her title after divorce from her young husband. She was one of the personalities of London, had been for many years, she was still good-looking, and could make herself extremely agreeable when she chose. As all the world knows, she was Jennie Jerome of New York when her marriage with a son of a Duke of Marlborough placed her at once in the innermost circles of English Society. But she made and held a position all her own. She had known all the great and eminent of her day: statesmen, princes, potentates and intellectuals; as the wife of that erratic but distinguished politician, Lord Randolph Churchill, she had wielded a certain power, and was now the mother of the rising Winston. She could have made her autobiography far more interesting than it was.

The first time I lunched at her house she was standing near the head of the stairs when I arrived, with a rather short round-faced good-looking youth – as I assumed him to be – beside her. ‘My son,’ she said. ‘Which one?’ I asked. ‘Why! *Winston* – of course!’ He was a Member of Parliament and the most discussed young man in England, but he did not look a day over twenty.

I sat beside him at table, and found conversation with him increasingly difficult. He seemed to me to grow sulkier and sulkier. On my other hand was Mrs. West’s brother-in-law, Morton Frewen – whose daughter, Clare Sheridan, was to dazzle us later. He was an agreeable man, but my attention was soon distracted to Prince Kinsky (of what is now known as Czechoslovakia) who sat at the other end of the table; it was a small party and what he said could be heard by all of us. He was holding forth on some crisis or other and expressed himself brilliantly.

When he went up to the drawing-room young Churchill was obliged to leave at once for the House. ‘Good-bye,’ he said to me sulkily. Then, as he was making his exit, he turned and scowled. ‘I’ve read all your books and admired them, but that is more than you can say of mine.’ And he went out and slammed the door behind him.

So that was it!

I went from Mrs. West’s to the house of Mrs. John Hall, incidentally one of the loveliest women in London. She was a Canadian by birth, and, like other colonials, much livelier in mind and manner than most Englishwomen. I had known her for several years; we had become rather intimate; and I often dropped in upon her, especially if I wanted to discuss some one I had just met. I told her of my rencontre with young Winston. ‘I had no idea he had written anything,’ I said. ‘Of course he was put out because I didn’t mention his books. Authors!’

‘Oh, but you should read them,’ she exclaimed. ‘*The*

*River War. London to Ladysmith. Ian Hamilton's March.* They are really distinguished works.'

And so they were, as I soon found to my own enjoyment. He is one of the most noble, lucid, and penetrating of writers, and it is a great pity his literary achievements have been so completely overshadowed by his political fame. I had just written (to anticipate) a review of his superb *Life of Lord Randolph Churchill* for the San Francisco *Argonaut* when both review and my copy of the book went up in flames on April 18th, 1906.

I told Mrs. Hall of a woman I had met at the luncheon whom I thought very charming. Sophy's face lit up. 'Oh, isn't she! And we are all so delighted now that she has really come into her own. She has lived in the shadow of her more famous sister who was our King's favourite so long. But now that the (mentioning some royal duke) is her lover she is quite the rage.'

How English! For some roundabout reason I recalled a conversation I had had with Mrs. Kinahan when I went to see her on my way through London to Bruges. 'Of course, Gertrude,' she had said, in the most matter-of-fact voice, 'when you disappear for several months with a book, like this, I assume that you take a man along with you.' I was somewhat taken aback, but looked her straight in the eyes and replied calmly: 'Oh, no. I always take the book at one time and the man at another. I couldn't possibly manage both at once.' And to the day of her death she never knew whether I meant that or not.

I related this incident to Sophy Hall and she laughed merrily. 'Why, of course! And she didn't mean in the least to be censorious, nor even to get a rise out of you. She was merely paying you a compliment.'

'No, not censorious. Merely curious.'

We returned to the subject of Winston Churchill and she told me of one of the sharpest repartees I ever heard.

Shortly after he had left the Conservative side of the House for the Liberal, he was taking a certain young woman down to dinner, when she looked up at him coquettishly and remarked with the audacity of her kind: 'There are two things I don't like about you, Mr. Churchill.' 'And what are they?' asked the budding statesman indifferently. 'Your new politics and your new moustache.' 'My dear madame,' he replied suavely, 'pray do not disturb yourself. You are not likely to come into contact with either.' One for Winston.

I first met Sophy Hall at a dinner, where, dressed in white with a wreath of green leaves in her brown hair, she made a picture I have never forgotten, and although there were several handsome girls present, she was the cynosure of all eyes. At that time she kept a hat shop in Bond Street. She had been wealthy, for her great-grandfather, Henry Duncan, who had founded the savings-bank system in 1810, had left a fortune, but it went as fortunes will. When it did, her first husband, Captain Oliver, resigned from the army and she opened her shop. It was quite successful – owing more to her personality than to the hats, I fancy – but a few years from the time of which I am writing her present husband, Major 'Johnnie' Hall, inherited the title and estates of his family, and they were quite well-off once more.

But in her little house, with only two maidservants besides the cook, she entertained delightfully, and I doubt if her invitations were ever refused. She was a great friend of Lord Granby, afterward Duke of Rutland. He must have been the tallest man in England, with the exception of 'Ossie' Ames, who was six feet eight. (All England laughed at the time of the Queen's Jubilee, when he headed the parade, and his sovereign called him to her carriage and asked him graciously, 'How tall *are* you, Captain Ames?' and in his embarrassment at the honour, he had gasped and stuttered: 'E-e-ight feet six, ma'am!')



Captain Ames, however, was so admirably proportioned and balanced that one rarely remembered his great height. He was also very good-looking, a true guardsman, and women were quite mad about him. But he was not overburdened with brains. I had met him at a breakfast during my second visit to London in the 'nineties, and the subject of George Moore's *Esther Waters* came up. He disposed of it in one sentence. 'I am not interested in reading about servants.' Almost as royal as 'We are not amused.' The other women hastened to agree with him.

But to return to Lord Granby. He carried his great length of limb rather lankily, but he had a beautiful Christ-like face that seemed curiously out of place in the British aristocracy. Much to my surprise, the first time I met him, he told me he was a director on the board of some prosperous company, and offered to invest for me any superfluous capital I might have. I had none, but thanked him kindly. Among the many distinguished and agreeable men I met at Sophy Hall's dinners and breakfasts he stands out in my memory as a rather romantic figure, not only because of the strange contrast between his mind and his face, and his historic background, but because he looked as if he might be the perfect lover. And so, I heard more than once, he was! His wife, Lady Granby, was the leader of an inner circle of fashionable intellectuals who called themselves 'Souls'; a select body, alas, that expired in scandal.

It was at the dinner where I first met Sophy Hall that I went down with Baden-Powell, the hero of Mafeking and father of the Boy Scouts. He told me he was descended from Pocahontas! He couldn't wait until we were seated at table to tell me, but brought it out as we were on our way downstairs, and seemed to be prouder of the fact than of all his medals. I think he felt I ought to look upon him as a sort of cousin.

THE question of precedence must be a trial to London hostesses, particularly when they are newly fledged. I went one night to a dinner at the house of Lord Roberts, who had recently been given another step in the peerage. He was the most distinguished soldier in the Empire, not excepting Lord Kitchener, a little man but tremendously military in appearance. Lady Roberts was tall, stout, commanding; they made a quaint picture as he trailed behind her when entering a room. She was known as the terror of the subalterns, who feared her far more than they feared 'Bobs,' certainly the most beloved general in the army.

To-night she looked no less a martinet than usual, but rather painfully preoccupied. Pairing and precedent! Twin rocks upon which many a hostess has come to grief. I saw her muttering to herself as she lined us up, so to speak. A mistake would be fatal. This was almost an affair of State. The peeresses wore their coronets, the men their orders. Alfred Lyttelton, Colonial Secretary, who had just come from a King's Levee, was in a uniform literally covered with gold; he outshone the women. Lord Roberts wore the broad red ribbon of the Order of the Garter across his front. It was a dazzling assemblage, but if I had ever had the least desire to be a great hostess it expired that night. Far more fun to be a looker-on in life, drifting in and out of all sorts and kinds of sets, with no responsibility but to make oneself agreeable, or to invite one's hostesses to some fashionable restaurant for luncheon where the head waiter would take all the trouble, even to the matter of placing the cards properly.

My partner had a name which, until I went to England, I had never dreamed existed outside the fevered fancy of some old-time romantic novelist: Lord Charles Fitzmaurice. I told him that no modern American writer would dare use

such a name in one of his books, even if trying to give an accurate picture of the British aristocracy. Lord Charles was somewhat puzzled at first, but concluded to be amused and told me that when, years before, there had been a law passed in England permitting persons to change their names, the first to take advantage of the new privilege was a man named James Bugg who metamorphosed himself into Norfolk Howard!

The only picture in the dining-room was a striking portrait of the Kaiser in a red Field Marshal's uniform, painted, my partner told me, for Lord Roberts, and presented by the Imperial hand. They were intimate friends, but I have often wondered what Lord Roberts did with that portrait when he had fathomed the depths of that aspiring mind and was warning his countrymen in vain.

On my other hand was a massive person whose chest was covered with orders. He had taken in Lady Hamilton, but the time came, I suppose, when he thought he must address a remark to me. He looked down upon me with a sort of patronizing benevolence. 'So you are the lady who writes – all – those – nice – books,' he drawled. And smiled. Poor man, no doubt he meant to be nice himself, but I snubbed him horribly. Nice! Whatever my books had been called, even by American critics, never had they suffered an indignity like that. I turned my back on him. Lord Charles, who had a sense of humour, almost giggled.

When we rose to leave the table Lady Hamilton muttered: 'I suppose I've got to hang back until all these peeresses are out. What a bore!' She was an independent Scot and a woman of great wealth in her own right, and it no doubt irked her to be forced to remember that her distinguished husband was only a baronet!

But Lady Roberts was lingering near the door raking us with lynx eyes. As Mrs. Lyttelton was a mere Honourable and I merest American we formed the tail of the procession.

I caught her sharp glance on me as I moved forward. Americans were incalculable, and authors even more so. Possibly I might take it into my head to precede the Marchioness of Lansdowne (the mother of my Lord Charles), who was the highest in rank of 'those present.' But I had no intention of upsetting the poor woman, who was unhappy enough already. She must have drawn a long sigh of relief when we were all upstairs in the drawing-room and she could let us take care of ourselves.

## XVI

MRS. PATRICK CAMPBELL, very beautiful at that time, was unquestionably the most popular actress in England; and as she was equally charming she had been warmly embraced by Society. I had met her in California through Alcece, who was now married to Ashton Stevens, dramatic critic of the *San Francisco Examiner*. She had a pretty house in a fashionable square and I went there one day to luncheon. Another guest was Mrs. Horner, interesting to me because she had been a friend of Burne-Jones, who had given her a number of his drawings, several of them sketches of herself. One of these she had given to 'Mrs. Pat,' and while we were looking at it she told me of the others and invited me to come to her house to dinner and see them. In the course of the conversation I happened to mention that I had never met Mr. Asquith, and she said she would invite him. No one else, and I could really talk to him.

Curious are the obscure workings of heredity. One of her daughters came into the drawing-room for a few moments before going on to a dinner of her own, and I almost gasped. She was a walking 'Burne-Jones.' Long curved throat and all. No doubt there are mental conceptions.

Mr. Asquith had a benign grandfatherly face framed in

rather long silver hair. As it was a small family party he let himself go and was very jolly and talked freely on a large number of subjects. I do not recall that he gave away any State secrets, however! When we were on the subject of popular novels he spoke of the time when all London was reading *The Quick or the Dead*, a novel by Amélie Rives which made a sensation in the 'eighties. 'But it is impossible to get London really excited over anything,' he said. 'We are too *blasé*. We just amble along and are surprised at nothing.' Perhaps he changed his mind in 1914.

Mr. Haldane came in after dinner and then my trials began. He wanted to know all about the public school system in the United States. Englishmen seem to think that an American should be a walking encyclopædia on all things pertaining to her country. Only a few days before, at a luncheon at Lady St. Helier's, I had sat beside the civic-minded Lord Reay who had catechized me on the same subject. Finding it impossible to switch him off, I had manœuvred to engage him in conversation with that eminent bacteriologist, Ray Lankester, who was on my other side. I was then let in for a discourse on fever germs, and Prof. Lankester informed us there was now no doubt that typhus was carried by the body louse. Just the thing an Englishman would tell you when you were eating an egg.

Mr. Haldane was not to be switched off either, and Mr. Asquith was talking to Mr. Horner. I had long since renounced bluffing and told him plainly that I knew nothing whatever about public schools. I had never attended one, and as they hadn't happened to force their way into any novel I was writing I had never given the matter a thought. He looked pained and said he was disappointed as he had come full of the idea I could enlighten him; it was a subject in which he was deeply interested. However, he was a nice man and began to talk about something else. After a time the Kaiser's name came up. All present, including myself,

expressed unbounded admiration for that man. I told them, however, that he was not popular in Bavaria. He had come to Munich not long since with his Empress and a small retinue, and as he drove from the palace to the Residenz all the city had turned out to look at him, but in dead silence. Not a cheer. Nor had he ever left the Residenz without the old Prinz Regent beside him, so terrified was the Bavarian royal family there would be an attempt to assassinate him.

‘But isn’t that hereditary rather than personal?’ asked Mr. Haldane. ‘He really is a charming fellow, and has no designs on Bavaria, any more than he has on the rest of the world. He is quite content to be Emperor *in* Germany. But “Bavaria” on the Siegesthor is still driving the lions toward Prussia! It isn’t a hatred of such long standing as that of Ireland for England, but equally nursed.’ And then, of course, they began to discuss the Irish Question.

## XVII

LORD DILLON, seventeenth viscount of his line, whom I had met at the St. Heliers’, was a rather romantic figure to look at. Tall, slender, distinguished, with a short pointed beard, he might have sat for the portraits of Charles I. And with good reason for he was descended from Charles II and the Duchess of Cleveland. Lady Dillon, when I was visiting at Ditchley, their place in Oxfordshire, showed me the bend sinister in the family coat-of-arms; something she would not have dreamed of doing to any but an American – and possibly a novelist! It was not my first experience of the kind; my English friends seemed to take for granted that I wanted to know everything about them and were willing to gratify my curiosity, even to showing me their letters-patent of nobility and the royal missives that had accompanied them, usually bound in large volumes.

Lord Dillon, although a wealthy peer, was no idler. He was President of the Society of Antiquaries, and of the Royal Archæological Institute, active curator of the Tower armouries. He talked brilliantly, and I was delighted when an invitation came to spend a few days at Ditchley.

However!

Those ancient and historic mansions of England are less comfortable than interesting. At Ditchley there were full-length portraits of kings and queens, presented after royal visits, and paintings by Holbein, Lely, Keppel, Hoppner (the whole house was a picture gallery), but no bath-room and no gas – let alone electricity. I had a spacious room with a fine view of the park, and newly furnished in chintz, but the tub brought to me every morning was of tin with a narrow rim on which I sat in mortal terror lest the whole thing turn over while I was making my insufficient ablutions. I dressed for dinner by the light of four candles, and when my toilette was completed – fortunately I had Élise to help me – I would stand before the cheval glass and move a candle up and down my length, managing to get some idea of how I looked in spots.

Lady Dillon, a Canadian by birth, had nothing of the extreme elegance of her husband. Her bright amiable face was plain, she was rather stout, and cared little what she wore. But she was full of the joy of life and interested in everything. It was evident that she was beautiful in the eyes of her husband. They had been married for a quarter of a century and were still lovers.

She showed me the connubial bed-chamber and the ancestral bed in which generations of Dillons had entered the world and left it.

‘But don’t you hate sleeping in a bed that so many persons have died in?’ I asked her. ‘Nothing would induce me to sleep in a bed that even one person had died in – if I knew it.’

'No,' she said. 'I like feeling that I am one of a line.' And I felt very American. All the same, if I had married an Englishman with ancestral estates and armorial bearings I should have stipulated for a brand-new bed as an item of the settlements.

At breakfast on the morning I left, Lord Dillon regaled me with an account of the rats that infested Ditchley. 'I meet one on the stairs every night when I go up to bed late,' he said. 'And this morning I found one on the desk in my study drinking from a vase of flowers. He hardly deigned to notice me.'

I have a greater horror of rats than of rattlesnakes, and nearly fainted. 'I believe you told me that to keep me from ever coming to this house again,' I said angrily; and then he was very much perturbed, for he was the most hospitable and friendly of men. Rats meant nothing to him.

He changed the subject to motor cars, against which he inveighed bitterly. People who called in them at Ditchley were forced to leave them at the lodge and walk to the house; never should one enter his gates. A few years later he had no fewer than three, but the English are slow to take up anything new. The day before I had gone for a drive with Lady Dillon, and as the horses had stood on their hind legs when passing a motor car and then tried to bolt, I was almost inclined to agree with him.

I visited at a good many country houses in England, and although my other hosts were reticent on the subject of rats and I never saw one, I was rarely comfortable. There were fires in drawing-room and dining-room but usually a vast expanse of ice-cold hall between, and my bare neck and arms turned blue until I learned to carry a scarf. The men, of course, in their snug broadcloth, were protected, but even the women seemed indifferent to the sudden change of temperature. From long habit, I suppose; although they usually had a mild case of sniffles.



Lady Hamilton was an exception. Sir Ian was in command of South-Eastern England, and they had taken a large Georgian house not far from Stonehenge; she not only had fires in every room but managed to warm the corridors, and I was more comfortable there than at any house I visited. There was another devoted couple! I met more husbands and wives in England still in love with each other after years of matrimony than I have ever met anywhere else. It was either that or lovers galore.

There was one of Ouida's guardsmen at the Hamiltons'. He was handsomer than 'Ossie' Ames, and of a reasonable height. I was prepared to be fascinated, not only on account of his looks, but because of his subtle suggestion that no other woman in the world existed. But, alas, I couldn't get an interesting word out of him. I have never had the patience to play up to technique.

Winston Churchill had been down at the previous weekend, and I regretted I had not been a member of that house party. He would have been interesting even to quarrel with, and I had now read his books. But although I saw a good deal of his mother, it so happened that I never ran across him again. London is so vast that you could dine out every night and rarely meet the same people twice in the course of a season; that is, of course, unless you confined yourself to one small circle, which I did not.

Barring men of letters, the most interesting men one met in England were those who had to do with affairs of State, diplomats, and editors of great publications. The deadliest of all experiences was to sit next to a man at dinner whose only interests in life were shooting and hunting. And this, of course, was one's fate if visiting during the season for either. Sometimes the men were so tired after a hard day's work they wouldn't talk at all. I often wondered why women were invited to the shooting parties – or, rather, why they went – for certainly they had little or no companionship

from the men and were thrown upon the society of one another. The Englishwomen didn't seem to mind, however. England at that time was still a 'man's world,' and what he did was right. The Militant Movement of Woman was in full spate, but tradition held.

## X V I I I

I HAVE never missed a big earthquake in California.

Late in the autumn of 1905 I went to San Francisco with two novels in mind. One (*Ancestors*) was to be laid partly in England, giving as accurate a picture as I could make of London Society and country-house life, and the rest in California, whither the hero -- inspired by Winston Churchill -- betook himself in order to make a new political career after being unexpectedly shelved in the House of Lords. When I arrived in New York a Mr. Lovell called on me and asked me to write a short novel for a series he was projecting, six of which were to be written by American women and six by English men. As he would take anything I chose to give him I concluded that here was my chance for *Rezdnov*. Whenever I had mentioned that subject tentatively to an American publisher he had invariably replied: 'Well -- yes -- if you haven't anything else in mind. But if you *can* give us a modern novel we'd much prefer it. The American public is not interested in Spanish California.' And as I always happened to have a modern novel ready to come to birth, *Rezdnov* was shelved.

I had made up my mind to lay the scene of the second part of *Ancestors* in the North, as Southern California had been written to death. After a driving tour with Muriel I decided upon the little town of Petaluma, then very picturesque, and surrounded by great ranches, one of which my hero was supposed to have inherited from American ancestors. I wrote the English part of the book there, and

then, in the spring, went to Berkeley to write *Rezánov*, leaving my trunks, alas, in the Occidental Hotel in San Francisco, where Ashton and Aleece had an apartment.

From my room in the Berkeley Inn I could see the Golden Gate, through which *Rezánov* had sailed a hundred years ago that very month of April, and felt doubly inspired. But I wrote only the first two or three chapters in that room.

In the dawn of the eighteenth I was awakened by a noise like that of a regiment of cavalry charging across the world. I had a fancy that it roared straight through the Golden Gate and a quarter of a second later precipitated itself against the Berkeley Inn with a shock that nearly disrupted the foundations. I sprang out of bed and opened the door; a wise thing to do in an earthquake, as doors are apt to spring and it is not pleasant to be imprisoned while the earth is tossing.

There was a sound of crashing china and glass all over the house, a few screams. The shock was comparatively brief, and I was about to return to bed when the fun began. The earth danced, and leaped, and plunged, and roared. 'This is the end of California,' I thought. 'We are going to the bottom of the Pacific.' My mind darted back in the whimsical fashion of thought in acute crises to a prediction of Bret Harte. 'Some day,' he had said, 'a mighty earthquake will engulf San Francisco, but Oakland will be spared, for even the earth couldn't swallow Oakland.' And then I thought: 'Well! An invading army, mad with blood lust, would be worse.'

I fancy that fear or its absence is a matter of nerve condition. I had recently had a severe illness in Munich, and Doctor von Zetzvich had kept me in bed for six weeks; I had never given my nerves a rest and now was the opportunity. I had grumbled but obeyed him; in consequence my nerves were in perfect order, and that no doubt was why I felt no sensation of fear. It seemed to me that I was

standing on my toes in that door-way – the safest place in an earthquake – my mind suspended, merely wondering what was coming next. The din was terrific. Falling chimneys. Rafters grinding. Masonry fairly screaming. The earth – or the atmosphere – roaring.

Suddenly there was a violent twist, as if the house were being wrenched from east to west, and the earthquake finished as abruptly as it began.

It is absolutely *de rigueur* in California to treat an earthquake as a joke (after it is over!). You are no thoroughbred if you don't, and on a par with those outlanders who know no better than to corrupt San Francisco into 'Frisco. I turned my head and saw a New York woman leaning against the wall, pallid and gasping. 'Quite a shake, wasn't it?' I said nonchalantly, and walked to the window.

The street was swarming with young men and women – University students, presumably – in sketchy attire, talking volubly and laughing. A man was already on his roof throwing down the bricks of his fallen chimney. My tall landlady in a brief wrapper over her nightgown, her hair in two tight pigtails, was stalking down the street.

It was only a little after five and I went back to bed. But hardly to sleep! I was not as stoical as that. I dressed and went downstairs to the living-room and read the San Francisco morning newspaper, delivered but a few moments before the earthquake. It contained a dramatic account of a great shipwreck that had occurred on the northern coast the day before; the disaster had been the sole topic of conversation, for several well-known San Franciscans were on that vessel pounding on the rocks. Interest in that shipwreck was never revived, but it came back to me when I wrote *Tower of Ivory*.

The landlady, true to the California tradition, served breakfast as usual, and fortunately her servants were Japs, to whom earthquakes were all in the day's work.

I was far too restless to write, and felt sure that San Francisco was more interesting than Berkeley. Moreover, although I didn't like to admit it, I was a little uneasy. Muriel, now married, was living on the island of Belvedere in the Bay. True, that island was the ridge of a mountain that had finished with subsidence long since, but nevertheless I thought I'd feel easier in mind if I saw it still resting on the face of the waters. And I was curious to learn how Aleece had stood the experience. She was mortally afraid of earthquakes and always screamed steadily from start to finish. The Occidental Hotel was an old building on Montgomery Street and no doubt had been badly shaken. Daisy, who lived far out in the Western Addition in a small apartment house, had probably fared better.

## X I X

THE tracks of the Berkeley trains had been twisted by the convulsion and I was obliged to go to Oakland and get a ferry boat thence to San Francisco. Early as it was there were a number of persons on board, bound, like myself, to look up friends and relatives. One heard the usual bromides. 'I was sure the end of the world had come.' 'Wasn't it awful?' 'A wicked city like San Francisco was bound to be punished some day.' 'A judgment of God if it's shaken down.'

I soon saw that Belvedere was intact. So, apparently, was the city, sitting serenely on its hills. But I had my first misgiving when I saw a column of smoke rising in the windless air. And then some one shouted: 'San Francisco is on fire!' and all rushed pell-mell to the bow of the boat. But the long Ferry Building is rather high and the closer we approached the less we could see. We could smell the smoke; however. I found some encouragement in the fact that the tall graceful

tower of the Ferry Building had not fallen. If it had withstood the violence of the earthquake, unsupported as it was, no doubt all the new buildings of reinforced concrete were still erect. As for wooden houses – and the city was largely built of wood – they withstand any earthquake unless the foundations are faulty.

When the boat moored there was a stampede up the gangplank, and as I had no desire to be thrown about in a rush I waited until the others were off and then walked quickly through the Ferry Building.

My eyes were met by a truly appalling sight. On the far side of the Embarcadero, a wide expanse into which the streets running from west to east debouched, was a curtain of smoke and flame. The city was blotted out. This part of San Francisco is on 'made ground,' for the waters of the Bay once lapped Montgomery Street, many blocks west. The surface of the Embarcadero looked like a leaden sea, its waves arrested and immobile. Here and there were wide cracks.

My fellow passengers were all running in the direction of Telegraph Hill, a quarter of a mile north and beyond the present range of the fire. A solitary policeman was walking slowly up and down the middle of the Embarcadero. I went up to him and asked how I could reach the Occidental Hotel. He stared at me as if he were looking down upon a lunatic. 'There's no one left in the Occidental Hotel unless they're crazy,' he said. And then he added in sepulchral tones: 'City's doomed.'

Doomed. Razed to the ground. Holocaust. How many times I heard those words in the next few days. New terms are not invented in times of stress. Old ones, long abandoned and forgotten, spring to the surface of the mind. Originality of expression requires leisure to come to fruition.

'But I'd like to get there,' I persisted. 'Is it quite impossible?'

'You can get round by way of Telegraph Hill if you want to climb it, but it won't do you any good, for the fire is already raging in Montgomery Street. You'll never get into it.'

I glanced over at Telegraph Hill, an almost perpendicular headland. What use? If Ashton and Aleece were fleeing before the fire I hardly could find them.

'Where did you come from, anyhow?' asked the policeman.

I told him I had come from Berkeley, and he said with the voice of authority: 'Well, you go straight back there while you can. That fire may not be able to cross the Embarcadero but then again it may. This is no place for you.'

I concluded to take his advice. To my surprise, a man was standing behind the window of the ticket office; he was very pale but stuck to his post. Refugees would be pouring out of the city before long and it was his duty to see that the Southern Pacific was not defrauded of its due. As I turned away, a woman I recognized emerged from another booth and ran toward me. 'I just came over from Belvedere,' she exclaimed, 'and have to turn straight back. Isn't this too terrible! But you'll be glad to know that Muriel's all right. So is her house.' For a moment I was tempted to go to Belvedere, but as I might not be able to return to Berkeley for my clothes I thought it best to go back to the Inn.

Later in the morning I concluded to make another attempt, and this time took a small bag, intending to spend a few days in Belvedere. But as I disembarked from the train at the Oakland mole, with many others, a man in uniform appeared waving a paper above his head. 'By order of General Funston!' he shouted. 'No one is permitted to enter San Francisco!'

And then behind him came a horde of refugees from the city. I went up on the steps that led to the waiting-room, having no desire to be caught in the wild rush for the train.

I had cause to congratulate myself, for there was another heavy shock, and the refugees, Italians and Mexicans from Telegraph Hill for the most part, ran about screaming and fighting and calling upon the Virgin and all the saints to save them. I waited until they had disappeared into the train, and in consequence had to stand up all the way to Oakland, with a bird cage planted on my hip, and a steady torrent of 'experiences' poured into my ear by its Italian owner.

## XX

I SPENT that night watching the hills of San Francisco burn; columns of flames that looked to be miles high, rolling, twisting, gyrating mass of smoke shot with a billion sparks. They had begun to dynamite early in the day, hoping to arrest the progress of the fire – it had broken out simultaneously in several parts of the city – and the detonations were incessant. As at least a dozen of the boarders had invaded my room, which had the best view of the fire, to sleep was out of the question.

I found it impossible to work on the following day, and determined that one way or another I would get to Belvedere. In the late afternoon I managed to find a taxi and went down to the water-front, having heard that people were crossing to San Francisco in row boats.

They were! Not only were men crowded into large row boats but others were hanging on to the sides, their legs dangling in the water. Not an inviting prospect, even if they would have consented to add a woman to their numbers. Hardly!

I then caught sight of a small motor boat and was about to hail it when a man who was obviously a gentleman came up to me. 'That surly greedy beggar wants fifty dollars to take me to Sausalito,' he said, when I had told him of my



own destination. 'I cannot afford to pay that; not only have I but six dollars in my pocket, but heaven knows if I have anything elsewhere. My business was in San Francisco. But I am very anxious to get home to my family, and if you have more perhaps we could make a bargain with him.'

'I have only four dollars,' I replied, 'but I have my cheque book. Suppose you call him over and see what can be done.'

The man drove his boat to the wharf; he would not abate his price by a dollar, but consented to take my cheque when I told him it was on a New York bank.

It was a weird experience, that hour on the Bay. The night was dark save for the flaming city and patches of burning oil on the surface of the water, but at least I had someone to talk to; and Belvedere was not far from Sausalito. He told me his 'experience.' He had spent the night before the earthquake in Menlo Park, and, like all the business men who lived down the peninsula, had taken the 8.20 train for the city. What was an earthquake to interrupt the course of business? The only thing that worried them was the possible damage to office furniture from falling plaster. They joked about the 'great shake,' of course, and compared it with earthquakes of the past. They were a gloomy despairing body of men who took the next train back to their homes; to plunge into that sea of smoke and flame between the station and Market Street daunted the most ardent money-chaser among them. My friend had reached Berkeley by way of San José, hoping to get a boat thence to San Francisco and another across the Bay.

When we reached Sausalito I refused to take his six dollars, protesting that I had been only too glad to have his companionship; but he threw them into my lap and leaped to the shore. I now had ten dollars! Heaven only knew when I would have any more, for all the banks of San Francisco had gone by this time. For years after I carried

a hundred dollars in a money bag strapped to my waist, and of course had no use for it.

The fire lasted for three days before it was finally arrested on the hither side of Van Ness Avenue by dynamite; when it was over service was re-established between the northern and eastern sides of the Bay via the Ferry Building. As I had promised Muriel to remain with her for the present I went over to Berkeley to get the rest of my belongings. The three morning newspapers of San Francisco had combined and were publishing a daily issue in Oakland. I hunted up Ashton Stevens, who obtained permission to append a telegram to one of their own asking my New York banker to send me three hundred dollars by express.

Ashton told me that he and Aleece had run out of the Occidental in their bare feet with nothing over their night clothes but top coat and opera cloak, and then, as Aleece had refused to re-enter the hotel, they had walked to the St. Francis, where friends had given them shoes and clothes. The rapidly approaching flames had driven them forth again, and they had spent three nights with thousands of others on the hills beyond the city. When the fire was over they had obtained a lift in a milk wagon as far as the Ferry Building and were now living at his father's house in Oakland.

I went to see Aleece. She was still pale and haggard from fright and privations, but quite calm and inclined to take the situation humorously, although she had lost everything she possessed — except her opera cloak! 'And I wouldn't have that,' she said, 'if Caruso hadn't been singing the night before. You know I never hang anything up in a hurry.' She told me that Ashton had held her in the doorway while her screams added to the bedlam of sounds: the crash of glass from the skylight in the hall, pieces of furniture in the room flung against one another, pictures hurled from the walls; over all that menacing roar. The fat little pro-

prietor had waddled by gasping: 'D-d-o-n-t be fr-i-ghtened. It-it's o-only an ear-earthquake,' and then clinging to the banisters had stumbled down the stairs.

Daisy lived out on Fell Street, and dynamite had saved that part of the city. She lived there alone with her young daughter Boradil. Obligated to divorce her first husband she had married again, an elderly lawyer this time who had lost most of his practice. She had suffered another severe attack of rheumatism and he had given her so much morphine that she became an addict. But fortunately her old husband dropped dead one day and Aleece had put Daisy in a sanatorium; there she was cured, although her heart was permanently affected. Now, for the first time in many years she was living in comparative peace and comfort. Rose, grown too old to work, I had sent some time since to her daughter in Leavenworth, Kansas. There she passed a comfortable and happy old age.

## X X I

WITHIN a week only women still mentioned the earthquake; men had dismissed it from their minds and their talk was all of insurance, the problematic future of business, and the rebuilding of San Francisco. Before the embers were cold plans had been drawn for that rebuilding. Men walked about the ruins in khaki, self-conscious pioneers, factors in the rebirth of a great city. A spirit of altruism prevailed, and men forgot old enmities in the common cause. (Earthquake love, Mr. Phelan, that amiable cynic, called it later.)

Mr. Phelan, himself, was full of plans, not so much for a better city, being a profound student of human nature, but for a more beautiful one. Several months before he had imported Burnham, an eminent Eastern architect, and established him in a house on Twin Peaks where he could get

a comprehensive picture of the hills and valleys of San Francisco, and draw plans including wide streets and stately buildings. But that long-cherished ideal came to nothing despite this golden opportunity. Wider streets! Not a landholder would yield an inch of his frontage, and the business part of the city was rebuilt in a hurry on its old narrow thoroughfares – even then incubating the ‘traffic problem’ that agitates the Chamber of Commerce to-day.

At the moment, however, Mr. Phelan had his hands full as Chairman of the Citizens’ Finance Committee, the outcome of the Committee of Fifty, formed by the mayor at the insistence of Mr. Downey Harvey two hours after the earthquake, for the relief of the homeless; already in full flight to the Presidio and the hills beyond the city. Congress, as soon as the full extent of the disaster was appreciated, voted a million and a half for relief, but hesitated to send it to Mayor Schmitz, who, corrupt himself, was the chief tool of the notorious boss, Abe Ruef, one of the most crooked, clever, and unscrupulous blackguards in the corrupt political history of San Francisco. When, however, President Roosevelt learned that Mr. Phelan was Chairman of the Finance Committee, he sent the money to him personally, a godsend to San Francisco whose underground bank vaults were still too hot to open.

James D. Phelan was the wealthiest man in San Francisco and its leading citizen. He had doubled the fortune left him by his pioneer father, but although no one enjoyed life more than he, nor got more out of it, he took an active interest in civic affairs, and had sacrificed himself to the extent of occupying the mayor’s chair five years (1897-1902), instituting many and notable reforms that gave him added prestige and innumerable vicious enemies. Graft of all kinds was abolished during his régime, and many incomes curtailed! Ruef and his ‘cohorts of vice,’ burrowing underground, secured enough votes eventually to seize the reins

again, and wallowed in a very orgy of civic disgrace until the earthquake and fire aroused a different spirit in the community. Schmitz dared not refuse Mr. Harvey's demand for an immediate relief committee, and Ruef, for the moment, returned to his burrows.

I had met Mr. Phelan for the first time when I returned to San Francisco after ten years' absence and the publication of *The Conqueror*, and he had begun at once to entertain me and show me many attentions. I don't think that in those early days of our acquaintance he was attracted to me personally. Although but little over forty at that time he was the old-fashioned type of male whose preference was for a less independent type of woman, one more exclusively feminine, leaving to man the honours and kudos of life.

But I had added to the prestige of his beloved California, and was, therefore, worthy of homage. For the same reason, many years later, he showered attentions on Helen Wills, and was inordinately proud of her. It would have been a terrible blow for him – for the rest of us, for that matter – if the beautiful and world-famous tennis champion had been born in Kansas City. I told him once that the reason he had never married was because his one true love was California. He was not one to give away any secrets and merely smiled.

A certain reserve I was aware of in those early attentions he paid me, was caused, no doubt, by the natural wariness of a bachelor millionaire who had had too many caps set at him for his own comfort. But he was an astute man of the world, and had found as many opportunities to fathom the depths of woman as any man of his time; in due course he arrived at the understanding that I was as averse from matrimony as himself, the acquaintance ripened into friendship, and although I have had many friends among men, never had I had one so devoted, consistent, loyal – and valued. He was a man of strong character, high ideals tempered

with worldly cynicism, a broad and charitable outlook, and while one side of his mind was intellectual, with a great love of literature and particularly poetry, the other was shrewd, far-seeing, financial; and he was Nature's own politician.

## X X I I

SAN FRANCISCO was a quaint sight in that first period succeeding the fire. The hills were covered with huts and tents hastily erected for those whose districts had been burnt over and who had no friends across the Bay. West of Van Ness Avenue, where the fire had been checked, the householders cooked in the streets; every chimney had cracked or fallen. Rich women whose servants had deserted them to enjoy a few weeks of leisure on the hillsides at the expense of the Committee, could be seen, an apron tied about the middle, brows puckered, frying chops and brewing coffee, to the delight of an audience of South of Market Street children.

One day I took a walk up Van Ness Avenue with Mr. Phelan. Booths had been erected all along the west side and he bought me a bag of candy! We both ate it openly, rejoicing in the new freedom. Conventions had gone by the board.

We passed the correct Paul Elder, who had owned one of the fashionable bookstores, sitting on a box with his young assistant, John Howell; they were holding between them a wide square of white cloth upon which the new address of the soon-to-be-revived firm, it was hoped, was hand-printed in large black letters. We paused and shared our candy with them, exchanging the inevitable jokes and predictions.

Old men, looking thirty years younger than when sunk in routine, hurried by, their faces set to the future. Old women, who had sat in corners for years complaining of

draughts, walked briskly past us, full of a new and almost romantic interest in life. Not a depressed nor an anxious face was to be seen. The old spirit of the West revived. All were at their best at that time, a pitch above normal; but a good many of them relapsed in due course.

A month after the disaster Sarah Bernhardt came West to fill an engagement of long standing. As there were no theatres left in San Francisco and none large enough in Oakland, she gave her performance of *Adrienne Lecouvreur* in the open-air Greek Theatre in Berkeley. It holds between six and seven thousand persons, and every seat was filled. As the tickets were three dollars each, that meant an expenditure of some twenty thousand dollars from depleted pocket books, but the enthusiastic theatre-goers of San Francisco and environs were not to be balked of the rare pleasure of hearing that golden voice. The birds sang an accompaniment in the surrounding trees. The unflecked sky was like an inverted bowl of lapis lazuli. The air was warm and caressing. Bernhardt told Ashton she had never felt so inspired to do her best.

It was very difficult, I found, to project myself back a hundred years when I had never felt more acutely in the present. Muriel had a large and very comfortable 'ceiled' attic, and there I retired to the past for a few hours every day and managed to forget the present. When the book was finished I concluded to return to Munich by way of Alaska. One chapter involved a description of Sitka, and here was an excuse to see something new. The fine excursion boat was already full and I was obliged to take a coast steamer that had once carried passengers to Nome, during the gold rush. In my state-room was the notice: 'Kindly do not go to bed with your boots on.' The boat was very crowded, rather dirty, and the stewards, owing to a strike, were serving their novitiate; but although cots were put up in the dining-room

at night, I had managed to get a state-room to myself. I also made friends with the captain and spent most of that journey on the bridge.

The scenery of the 'Alaska trip' is that of Norway on a smaller scale – very beautiful, and not lacking in grandeur. Its chief attraction, however, the Muir Glacier, had been destroyed by an earthquake several years before. California earthquakes are insignificant compared with those of Alaska when that mighty waste delivers itself up to the throes. The one that wrecked Muir Glacier had lasted not for one long interminable minute, but for four days, and with unremitting violence. Three surveyors, who were caught near the coast, were unable to walk or even to stand erect; they scrambled, in the course of many hours, beyond the heaving zone on all fours.

The boat remained but a few hours in Sitka, but long enough for me to absorb the locale. I walked about in the dripping woods and invoked the shade of Rezánov, who spent many gloomy despairing months in that desolate spot.

When we returned to Vancouver I took the train for New York – more fine scenery for two days – and after I had corrected the proofs of *Rezánov*, sailed for Europe to write the second part of *Ancestors* in the peace and seclusion of Munich. Naturally, those California chapters would include the earthquake and fire; all my previous experience of my native State seemed flat by comparison.

## XXIII

THERE was an interesting group of Americans living in Munich at that time. Maude Fay, increasingly popular at the Hof, was a San Franciscan like myself and we soon became friends. She had an abounding vitality, high spirits, fine manners, and was one of the few Americans ever re-



ceived into the innermost circles of Munich Society. While studying in Dresden she had made friends with Frau von Velics, wife of the Austrian Minister to the court of Saxony. Velics was transferred to Bavaria about the time that Maude Fay made her *début* and the young prima donna met the noble families of the city at the Austrian Legation – Embassies, as they called themselves for style. She was as popular with them as with the public and could have married into the Bavarian aristocracy had she chosen.

Marcia Van Dresser, who had been one of the beauties of the American stage, a tall stately girl with dark hair, a magnolia complexion and chiselled features, was now cultivating her voice – a lyric soprano – and lived with her friend Gertrude Norman, who had given up her own career to devote her life to her more gifted friend; Marcia was full of talent but inclined to indolence, and ‘Toto’ Norman was her dynamo. They made an interesting pair, for Marcia, if rather lazy, had personality and a sense of humour, and ‘Toto’ bubbled over with vitality and intelligence.

There were also three friends of Maude Fay: Ruth Kelly, Mary Ayers, Adèle Brunc. And then there was Georg Richter, who, having spent several years in California with his father, Dr. Richter, regarded himself as half an American. (He brought Thomas Mann to see me one day; a handsome person, but so superior that I left him to the inner contemplation of his greatness while I talked to his more expansive friend.)

I drew into my own particular circle Reginald Tower, who liked Americans, Baroness Cerrini and her cousin Count Alfred zu Lippe, who entertained us in his bachelor establishment and had literary aspirations – and Marie von Hindenburg, whose husband was attached to the Prussian Legation.

Marie von Hindenburg had one of the most singular romances of the British peerage behind her.

Her mother, Lady Agnes Duff, daughter of the Earl of

Fife, married, very young, Lord Dupplin, heir to the earldom of Kinnoull. The bride was a beautiful little creature with golden hair and large blue eyes of the true angelic type. Her husband was very handsome, very fascinating. They were deeply in love and for a time lived happily – at Castle Kinnoull in Perth, where Marie was born. Then, probably through boredom, they began to quarrel. Both were spoilt children of fortune, and neither would yield. The time came when they did nothing but quarrel. A Mr. Flower appeared on the scene and attempted to console the discontented young wife, who cared nothing for him but was not averse from further tormenting her husband.

Then one night they had a terrific quarrel. She vowed that when he woke up in the morning he would find her gone, and sure enough he did. As far as I can make out the quarrel was in bed. That was before the days of twin beds, and she must have slept on the outside of the ancestral four-poster or she would have been obliged to climb over him.

Flower lived near-by with his mother, and Lady Agnes took refuge in his house, reluctantly chaperoned by Mrs. Flower. Dupplin was frantic, for he was still in love with his young wife. But neither old Lady Kinnoull nor the combined family of Fife could induce her to return to her husband. Little angels can be very obstinate at times. When convinced that he had lost her, Dupplin sued for a divorce, and vowed that he would become a *charmeur* and break up as many homes as a man could in one short lifetime. Lady Agnes married Flower, who almost immediately became a hopeless invalid, leaving her after four or five miserable years without a penny. As her family had cast her off she had no recourse but to go to work, and as she had had no experience in anything but nursing, she entered a hospital.

And here comes the incredible part of the story.

When a little girl and living on one of the ancestral estates

in Scotland, it had amused her to help her mother to entertain the tenantry at the yearly open-air festivity. A shy youth named Cooper, son of the town recorder, proficient in games, and a friend of the farm lads, was invited to take part in these festivities and never failed to put in an appearance. When he first saw Lady Agnes she was still in short skirts, her golden curls flying loose in the wind, but even then he trembled when she threw him a word or bestowed upon him a fleeting gracious smile. She became the lady of his dreams, and as she grew older and even more beautiful, his infatuation increased. Humble as was his station, and hopeless as was the prospect of ever winning more than an absent smile from this daughter of the Fifes, he made no attempt to curb his obsession, and vowed that, as he could not marry her, he never would marry at all.

But he was an ambitious youth otherwise. He wanted to be a surgeon, and his unusual cleverness enlisted the interest of a wealthy gentleman in the neighbourhood who gave him the education he craved. In due course he went to London. There he rose rapidly in his profession, and in 1882 he was well on his way to becoming one of the great surgeons of England, with royal favours dangling before him.

He was walking through the wards of a hospital one day on a visit of inspection when he saw a frail golden-haired little creature scrubbing the floor. He was a big manly fellow and the sight annoyed him. He paused above her. 'You are not strong enough for this work,' he said angrily. 'I shall speak about it.'

She sat back on her heels and looked up at him; and in that worn but still lovely face he recognized the lady of his dreams. Not a muscle of his own face moved, however, as he helped her to her feet. There was no recognition on her part; she had long since forgotten this humble admirer of a happy girlhood, if, indeed, she had been more than passingly aware of his existence.

He questioned her gruffly, and she told him that she had had experience in nursing, but was obliged to conform to the laws of the hospital and serve her apprenticeship. And then, rather resenting his patronage, she announced proudly that she was quite equal to the work.

'Well, you are not,' he said brusquely. 'And at this rate you'll be on the parish before the year's out. If you are obliged to support yourself I'll find you an easier job. Come to my house this afternoon.'

She was really on the verge of exhaustion and concluded to be thankful for his interest. She called at the hour appointed. He told her of his boyish infatuation, of his lifelong devotion to a memory, his fidelity to an ideal. She was still very young; she was deeply thrilled. He must, indeed, this big good-looking successful man with his long-cherished passion, have seemed like those knights of old who rescued lovely damsels imprisoned in towers, to say nothing of manna from heaven.

They were married immediately. No happier nor more devoted couple ever lived, and she bore him half a dozen children – one of whom married Lady Diana Manners!

## X X I V

DUPPLIN meanwhile was leading a vastly different life. True to his vow he wrested as many women from their husbands as succumbed to his experienced wiles, and appeared in the divorce court so often as co-respondent that it became monotonous. When his debts had piled mountain-high he fled to Paris, where he lived a wild life as long as his credit lasted.

All this time, despite the protests of Lady Kinnoull, he kept the little Marie with him, and she told me that she used to tremble upstairs in her room at the carousing below. Not a woman would stay in that house; she had a tutor

instead of a governess; and if her father became too drunk to protect her those men might force their way into her room. (I drew on that experience when I wrote *The Crystal Cup*.) Of course she had no friends of her own sex; Dypplin's boon companions in Paris were among the wildest of his own class, and ladies of the *demi-monde*. Her life was lonely and unprotected and terrifying. Fortunately Nature had given her character and intelligence, and she developed a canny ability to protect herself.

Finally his debts once more drove him out and they went to the Riviera, where he took a villa and pursued his accustomed way. There, when she was sixteen, he died opportunely of gastric ulcer, and her grandmother hastened down to claim her.

For several years she lived a quiet life with this clever old lady in Castle Kinnoull, but from a succession of old-fashioned governesses learned little or nothing. A girl of unusual intelligence, she felt her ignorance deeply, and when Lady Kinnoull died leaving her a small income, she went at once to London. There, to the intense disapproval of the Fifes and other noble relatives, she took a flat and announced her intention to live by herself. Life had made her independent, indifferent to criticism, and she was free for the first time. All the old duchesses warned her that unless she engaged the services of a duenna she would be ostracized socially, although Lady Kinnoull had presented her at court and given her a brief season in London.

But she won out. Society, although it disapproved of a young woman living alone in a flat, sympathized with one whom life had treated so harshly, recognized her as a personality, and as one too interested in improving her mind, and too disgusted with men from painful experience, to be liable to the usual indiscretions. During a visit to Rome she met Herbert von Hindenburg, and in him found a life companion both intellectual and understanding.

Without beauty, save for her long, graceful figure and a wavy mass of gold-brown hair, she had a face that drew attention the moment she entered a room. It was a face stamped with tragedy and too intimate a knowledge of life, and this, added to its breeding, intelligence and dignity, focused every eye. Men turned from handsomer women to ask who she was, and met her as quickly as they could compass.

I had met her at the Romneys in London, where she told me that her husband, who was in the diplomatic service, had been transferred to Stuttgart, and asked me to visit her there; it was but a short journey from Munich. She interested me even more than Lady A. had done.

Hindenburg was not as well-known a name then as now, and I forgot it. I received a letter from her after her arrival in Stuttgart and mine in Munich, renewing the invitation, but as I couldn't make out the signature it was impossible to answer it. I was very much embarrassed and wrote to Lady Romney asking her to tell me the name of the fascinating person she had asked me to meet; she, replied, giving me an outline of the lady's history, but, alas, the name was illegible! I never did answer that letter, and, of course, I never got to Stuttgart.

Then came my illness, and one day when Reginald Tower was paying me a visit of condolence, I spoke of the episode. He knew at once who she was and offered to write to her conveying my apologies and explanation. Therefore when her husband was transferred to Munich I called at once and we quickly became friends. It was then she told me her family history and her own tragic experience.

I knew she had written a monograph on Diane de Poitiers, and asked her why she didn't write a novel founded on her own life; but she said she had no flair for the modern novel, and cared to write nothing but historical romance. While in Stuttgart she had delved into the State archives and un-

earthed all there was to be known of Wilhelmine von Gravenitz,\* famous as the mistress of the Duke of Württemberg in the eighteenth century. Out of this rich material she was writing a book that soon after appeared under the title, *A German Pompadour* – a fascinating historical novel of the highest quality, both accurate and romantic. It was followed several years later by *The Winter Queen* (Elizabeth Stuart, Queen of Bohemia), equally brilliant and absorbing. Unfortunately they came out at a time when English authors were discovering the great middle class, and anything dealing with royalty and aristocracy was in the discard. In America, although these notable books were published by Scribner and the Houghton Mifflin Company, the price was prohibitive, and they never received the public recognition they deserved. It was the public's loss. I induced Scribner's to bring out a dollar-and-a-half edition of *A German Pompadour*, but little success attended it. Some day, I have no doubt, those books will be 'discovered' and delight thousands of readers. She signed them with her maiden name, Marie Hay.

A friend of Marie Hindenburg's, who visited her frequently in Munich, was Leila von Meister, who also had a history. Her parents, who were Southerners, had run the blockade during the Civil War, and taken refuge in England, where she was born. Their properties, of course, had been confiscated, they had a narrow income, and were obliged to live quietly in Kensington. Slender chance for a beautiful and ambitious girl to marry well. But somewhere on the Continent she met Herr von Meister, the owner of a whole town of silk mills, and a rising man in the favour of his Emperor. He fell in love with the penniless beauty and married her. When I met her he was Regierungspresident, what we would call Governor, of that part of Northern Germany whose capi-

\* Lion Feuchtwanger deals with a later period of this strange woman's history in *Jew Süss*.

tal was Wiesbaden, and she reigned in the palace there, and in the immense villa Meister built at Homburg, as a minor queen. She became a great friend of the Kaiser, who was fascinated by her wit, her lively mind, and high spirits. Possibly she was the only woman he ever knew who was not afraid of him; on the other hand, as she was really a great lady, she knew exactly how far to go in ragging him and made no mistakes.

She was six feet tall, but perfectly balanced, and tremendously 'smart.' She looked more Spanish than American, although her skin was ivory-white. With her beauty, dash, and natural bubbling gaiety, it was no wonder she fascinated the Kaiser, who must, indeed, have found her a relief from the women of his court. 'People say I hate women,' he is reputed to have said. 'But I don't. I only hate German women.' That friendship never faltered; he wrote to her from the battlefield during the War, and she visits him and his 'Empress' at Doorn. .

She played the banjo, had a charming voice, and an immense repertoire of songs. When I gave a tea during her visits she was always willing to delight us, and I was besieged for invitations. With her dazzling Spanish beauty and quick play of expression she made a picture not easily forgotten. Those were gay, care-free times in Munich, and now we are scattered to the winds of heaven.

## X X V

ONE of the most interesting persons I met during those later years in Munich was John Lambton, now Earl of Durham. He came to Munich to study German, being destined – by his father, not by himself! – for the diplomatic career. The British Minister lodged him with an impecunious German baron who made a practice of taking in young diplo-



matic aspirants and seeing they were properly instructed. He was then about twenty-four, tall, good-looking in an immature way, with large, cold, intelligent eyes (capable of a great variety of expression) and an almost childish mouth: index to a contradictory personality. In mind he was *instruct* far beyond his years and the term high-brow might have been invented for him; he was also a man of the world as far as abstract knowledge went and such experience as was inevitable in a young man of his class. But in character he was barely developed. I fancy that is the case with a good many aristocratic young Englishmen; the English wife sticks to her husband like a burr, lest his affections wander, and leaves her children to governesses and tutors. If boys and girls receive no companionship from their elders during their formative years, how can they be expected to develop in character? I do not know what his school experience had been, but as he was intellectual and shy and not fond of games, it is probable that he found little companionship in his class-mates. He had spent a year with the British Embassy in Constantinople 'unofficially attached,' and visited a relative who was Governor-General of Canada; from which experiences, no doubt, he derived his man-of-the-world air, and sharpened a natural shrewdness in estimating character, but they had done little to mature him otherwise.

He was full of vague ideals and worldly cynicism, and would have liked to live the life of a wealthy dilettante, entertaining brilliantly and giving largely—an ideal patron of the arts. But his father, the twin of Lord Durham, had little money, and could make him only a small allowance. Economy was a word he had never adopted into his vocabulary, and he was always in debt. When I asked him why he didn't go to work, as an American boy would have done who wanted money, he stared at me in vague wonder. It was doubtful if he had ever heard the word 'work' before.

He was thoroughly spoilt, not by his family but by the

traditions of his class, and a more helpless mortal I never met. He should have been followed about the world by a retinue of servants who would have saved him all but the effort of breathing. At home, whatever else he may have lacked, he had been abundantly served, no doubt in large spaces, and done exactly as he pleased; and there could have been little variation during his sojourns in Turkey and Canada. Here, to his utter disgust, he was confined to one small room, expected to wait on himself, and to study German for at least two hours a day.

He was not to be beaten, however! In his subtle way he managed to wring a certain amount of luxury out of those untoward conditions. At least he could lie in bed until noon, and the two little barons, sons of his host, were initiated into the duties of valets. They helped him to dress, ran his errands, waited on him hand and foot. As he had great charm and the most exquisite manners, the baroness too became his slave and tacitly encouraged him to neglect his studies, much to the wrath of the conscientious baron. He groaned over his tailor's bills, but no one was ever more impeccably turned out, and after a long and late toilet he sallied forth quite the best dressed man in Munich. If he walked, it was as if he had a ten-pound weight attached to each foot, but he usually took a cab to go round the corner. Never have I known anyone so lazy physically and so alert mentally. If he had chosen to study he could have mastered German in six months, but he preferred to read what interested him instead; and he was as particular about the format of his books as of the content. A sybarite on a small income! Tragedy, no less! Possibly he might have had a larger income if his uncle Durham had approved of him. But he hated killing things and refused to shoot when staying at any of the ancestral estates – a gesture of contempt in the face of a sacred tradition. A British nobleman is a sportsman or nothing. His entire family regarded him as

a deflection from the normal because he preferred books and art to potting birds and racing across country in pursuit of a desperate fox. But for all his indolence he was as obstinate as they, quite indifferent to their disapproval. Oddly enough, there was nothing effeminate about him.

To me he was a highly interesting study. I had always wanted to get to the core of Englishmen, but in the rush of London, or even in country houses, there was little opportunity to do more than skim the surface – and speculate on the folds and layers underneath. But in Lambton, whatever his divagations, a whole class was revealed; he was an individual, but at the same time the product of a system; as he was quite willing to talk by the hour, if his long length of limb was at ease on my divan, there was little I did not know about the British aristocracy before his sojourn in Munich was over.

Of course he was much in demand by Munich Society – with his name, his charm, his presumptive earldom. Curiosity alone would have made him accept the hospitalities showered upon him, for Munich in certain respects was unlike any other German city, had it not been for one harrowing drawback. Continental women-of-the-world have an elaborate technique with men, and he was far too indifferent (and shy) to play up to it. And of course he would be expected to make love to them; that was part of the ritual. He was far too lazy to make love to anyone. The mere thought terrified him. Englishmen are sentimental and romantic under their impassive exteriors, and no doubt he had his dreams of some enchanting girl, destined for him by heaven – and who would do all the work.

But at present he took refuge with me, with whom he felt safe, and, young as he was, I have rarely had a more satisfying mental companion. For that matter, he looked forty when his mind was at work, and it was an independent inquiring mind, interested in everything, and he had his own

ideas on all subjects. He also liked Maude Fay immensely, Marcia Van Dresser and Toto Norman, all unique in his experience, and with no designs upon him. 'He's a bit young, isn't he?' said Maude Fay with a sniff. 'Interesting and individual, but quite the infant. Moreover, to work him up to the point of even a mild flirtation, would take more time than I've got to spare.' Nevertheless, she liked him, as we all did, and, to the wrath of Munich Society, he neglected it more and more, and identified himself with us. The little barons were running all day with notes of apology; in fertility of excuse, charmingly expressed, he was unsurpassed.

## X X V I

It was shortly before his arrival in Munich that I opened the *Paris Herald* one day and my eye was arrested by pictures of an American girl of great wealth and a young English nobleman, whose engagement had been announced. Both were distinct types. She had the somewhat vacant prettiness of a girl pampered from birth, who knew nothing of life, had never had an idea in her head above dress, parties, and beaux, and was wholly without background in the Old World sense; her grandfather had worked his way up to million-aiedom in his shirt sleeves.

The face of the young man, whose father's title was one of the oldest in the peerage, while not intellectual, suggested brain-cells behind stored with inherited impressions, intelligence, traditions, and awareness of responsibilities.

How long will *that* marriage last? I thought. He will tire of her in a month.

Even then a novel began to stir in my mind, and Lambton, when I met him, walked straight into it and assumed the role of hero. When I told him, he was immensely pleased, and when I told him further that I should study him relentlessly,

he said cheerfully that he would turn himself inside out and tell me everything else I wanted to know. Reserved and shy as he was, he liked the idea of being the hero of a novel. However, I imagine he believed he had indulged in a few reticences, for when *Tower of Ivory* came out he wrote me he was rather appalled! Under all that indolent good nature, that congenital laziness, helplessness, backwardness of character, and exquisite manners, I detected a hard and ruthless core; and that was one of the most interesting things about him.

I took him to Bayreuth to hear *Parsifal*. Took is the correct word, for I had to buy the tickets, rescue the luggage, find the porters, settle him in his room when we got there. Marcia and Toto were already in Bayreuth and with great difficulty had managed to get us two tickets for the performance; they had also engaged our rooms. The accommodation was wretched, but we were fortunate to get any, and I am bound to say he made no complaint. All three of us, in the absence of the little barons, had to wait on him, see that he got his bath, that his room was properly aired, rout him out of bed in the morning; in fact we did everything but dress him and put him to bed. But he was so grateful – he never took anything for granted, and there was not an affectation in him – his manners were so beautiful, and he made himself so charming, that we felt quite rewarded!

It was not a good rendering of *Parsifal*. The Knight of the Holy Grail looked as if he were wandering round in his nightgown and sang none too well. The Kundry was a homely American woman who had forced her voice up from a mezzo to an indifferent high soprano – the whole performance not be compared with any given at the Metropolitan Opera House in New York.

We took our luncheon, during the 'pause,' in the open air at long, cheap, badly served tables that were reminiscent of the old twenty-minutes-for-dinner stations between

Chicago and San Francisco. Bad food on chipped plates was flung down before us and snatched away when half eaten. But at least it was Bayreuth! And we were a very jolly party.

## XXVII

PHILIP SASSOON, then about nineteen, came over to Munich that summer to study German, and also lodged with the baron. He was as active as Lambton was lymphatic; he might, indeed, have been strung on electric wires, wanted to be doing something every minute, often causing Lambton acute agony. To sleep late was out of the question with that dynamo in his room at nine in the morning demanding to be taken somewhere.

My niece, Boradil Craig, was with me (Daisy had died the year before of her damaged heart) and I had brought her over to study 'art,' for which she seemed to have some aptitude. She and Sassoon found a common bond in youth and desire to see things, and we four took excursions together – and nowhere in the world are there so many scenically and historically interesting places to visit as within a short distance of Munich. The white Romanesque castle of Neuschwanstein, on a solitary peak above the old town of Fussen, confronting the ancient brown castle of Hohen Schwangau on an opposite peak, lakes between, pine woods surrounding both, and three glittering Alps in the distance, dominates a scene of concentrated beauty equalled nowhere on earth. It was built by Ludwig II, and, with his two other castles, was regarded as an evidence of the madness that caused his downfall; to-day they are a perpetual source of revenue to the state, for thousands of tourists from all parts of the world visit them yearly.

At Neuschwanstein Ludwig had a throne room, supported

by pillars of porphyry, that would hardly have been modest in Berlin, and in his bedroom was a chair of state on a dais, flanked by tall lamps, where he was supposed to have done his nightly reading. Of course there was not a bath-room in the castle. In these three castles he lived alone, save for menials, sending for musicians from time to time, although they were not permitted to look upon his sacred person, nor enter the castle; they performed in the open. One day he had a violent toothache, and as it was unthinkable that he should visit a dentist, or that a dentist should desecrate the sacrosanct atmosphere of his castle, he stuck his head out of a lower window, and the poor dentist, standing on the terrace, pulled the tooth as best he could.

I don't suppose Lambton had ever walked so much in all his life before as he did through those castles, and of course Sassoon wanted to see every corner of them. Dignified and disgusted he followed us through endless corridors and suites, giving me an occasional glance of appeal, but too polite to remonstrate.

One night, however, he nearly lost his temper; not quite, for that would have involved too much exertion.

Not far from the Opera House is the Feldherrnhalle, a copy of the Loggia di Lanza in Florence, with statues of Tilly and Wrede, and facing the Ludwigstrasse. The audience quickly disperses after the opera, and one night when we reached the Loggia we might have been the only persons awake in Munich; we had not taken a cab, as we intended to walk to my apartment for supper.

Sassoon and Boradil began to dance on the platform before the Loggia. This was all very well, and Lambton looked on in languid amusement. But when Sassoon in an excess of high spirits kicked off his hat and played football with it he was highly offended. His cold eyes blazed and he told Sassoon in a few bit-off words what he thought of childish behaviour. Despite his lazy good-nature he could be haughty

and excessively dignified, and all his instinct of caste rose at the liberty!

But young Sassoon was irrepressible. Hauteur and aristocratic resentment made no impression on him. Moreover, he too was well spoilt. His mother was a Rothschild, his father an immensely wealthy man; no one had a better position in English Society. And it amused him to worry Lambton.

He was a nice boy and an extremely brilliant one, the life of our parties. As he dined at my apartment a number of times I suppose he thought he must do something to show his appreciation. When he left Munich he went to Paris, and thence sent me a present. It was a green silk petticoat! For Boradil he enclosed two immense artificial roses, more suitable for a dowager than for a girl not yet eighteen. He wrote me that his mother had offered to select the presents, but that he would not hear of it, and had bought them all by himself!

Lambton also wanted to make me a present. I told him that was nonsense; hadn't he given me a hero? But nothing would move him. When his quarterly allowance arrived he would buy me a mysterious 'something' he had seen and admired, before he paid his bills; his allowance never lasted long and he was always hard up.

One afternoon when I was hanging out of my window listening to the band in the Englischer Garten, I saw a vision approaching down the street. Lambton, his newest sage-green overcoat flowing open – socks and tie to match – was actually walking! Before him, holding something on his extended arms as if it were the Holy Grail, was one of the little barons. It sparkled in the sunshine like green fire. In my surprise and amusement – and the chaste seclusion of the Kaulbach Strasse – I gave an audible hoot. Lambton looked disapproving as he glanced up and lifted his hat, and did not accelerate his pace. I doubt if he would have run before



a fire. (And yet when the War broke out, he was one of the first in the field, fought with enthusiasm at Ypres, and although wounded in five places, resented bitterly being kept on home duty after dismissal from hospital. Of such stuff are spoilt, languid, and pleasure-loving young Englishmen made.)

The present was a beautiful green glass bowl in the modernistic Munich manner. I still have it; many other possessions have been broken during my wanderings, but so far it is intact. The next great earthquake, however, will probably claim it.

## XXVIII

I LEARNED of more than England from Lambton. Little as I had suspected it there was a 'night life' in Munich. While its stout and virtuous citizens, full of *kalb* and beer, were in their first heavy sleep, the wilder bloods and less estimable ladies gathered in the 'American bars': i.e. small night restaurants. Munich fancied the word 'bar' and had no idea of its specific meaning.

Lambton, whose active brain was full of curiosity about life, often frequented these bars, but as an observer, not a reveller. It was not the young officers and their lady-friends, he told me, who were most conspicuous in those rather heavily gay throngs, although the more respectable got as drunk and hilarious as Germans could.

There was a young foreign count in Munich, the scion of an ancient famous and historic house, the perfect aristocrat in appearance and bearing. His *raison d'être* in Munich was Art, and he had a studio where he painted rather well and entertained his friends. I met him at the Hindenburgs', who accepted him on his face value; Herbert was far too devoted a husband to indulge in night life, and Lambton, although he too met him there, confided in no one but me.

Few were more popular in Society than this handsome young count, nor made themselves more agreeable to women; he conformed to all the conventions of his class.

But – at night he painted his lips and cheeks, mascaraed his lashes, kohled his eyes, and sat about in the bars. Sometimes he even wore a blond wig! This was bad enough, but the remarkable thing about it was that he and others like him excited neither comment nor censure. It was estimated there were some two million pederasts in Prussia alone, and there was a persistent rumour that the Government was debating the wisdom of permitting them to marry one another openly; thus protecting the young and innocent. But it never came to anything, doubtless because Germany feared exposing her rotten spot to the criticism of the outside world. Little she guessed that the day was not far off when homo-sexualism and kindred subjects would be topics of casual conversation at tea-tables, cocktail parties, invade the movies, and be flaunted by those in search of high prestige.

Germany was full of queer contradictions. Outwardly it was not only one of the most manly of nations, but certainly the most military, and the most devoted, apparently, to the monarchical idea. One was always afraid of committing *lèse majesté*. In Bavaria, the mad King Otto was segregated in a remote castle, amusing himself, it was said, peeling potatoes in the kitchen, but the old Prinz Regent, who was positively villainous to look at, was adored by his people. There were already statues of him all over the place.

The atmosphere of Munich was one of perfect peace, harmony, security, and, as I have said before, there was no poverty. I had my first enlightenment when Fräulein Liesecke, who, with her sister, kept the smartest *pension* in Munich, told me of an experience in the courts. There was some trouble over a servant girl and she was forced to testify. She was a very pretty young woman, of good family, refined in appearance and manner. While she was on the

stand the judge treated her with such harshness that she broke down and left the court in tears. Afterward he sought her out and apologized. 'The Socialists are so powerful,' he said, 'that I dare not treat a lady with common respect if the other party is a member of the working class. I should never be re-elected!' Such were the currents seething even then below the placid surface of Bavaria.

I have said that Munich was unique in more than in its lack of poverty and devotion to art. It was the one city in Germany where independent spirits could lead whatever social life they pleased. In Berlin and other capitals if you were a member of the court circle you could not set foot in any other without losing caste. In fact, it was not permitted. You were born an aristocrat or a bourgeois and that was the end of it. The Emperor might invite the heads of state to functions at the palace, but, if they were of the middle-class, never their wives.

But Munich, no doubt because it was the headquarters of art and intellectualism, had established a different standard. All sets met and mingled. Even the Prinz Regent had many friends among the gifted bourgeois, and invited them to lunch and dinner at the Residenz, merely conforming to tradition in excluding them from functions of state.

It was for this reason that Count Alfred zu Lippe, who was of semi-royal blood, lived in Munich where he could freely enjoy the society of intellectuals. He complained sometimes that they ate him out of house and home, but at least they never bored him. Baroness Steffie disapproved, but Mariette upheld him, and no doubt was his sponsor when he took up his residence in Munich. The only thing that consoled Steffie was that at least he was conscientious enough to observe his 'house law' – which permitted him to ally himself with royalty – and refrain from marriage with any one of less than sixteen quarterings.

One day Steffie told me that an old friend of hers, Princess

Mary Wrede, bored with the narrowness of court life, was coming to Munich to live – and intended to establish a *salon*. This had been the ambition of her life, and now that her husband was safely stowed away in the ancestral vault, she was determined to accomplish it.

‘And we must give a reception to start her,’ said the conservative little baroness with a sigh. ‘But Mariette and Alfred have promised to invite only the very cream, so they won’t misbehave, at least, nor look as if they never bathed. It shall be as exclusive as I can make it.’

So, when the day came, the Cerrini ancestors on the walls looked down upon quite a brilliant gathering. Steffie wore a Scotch-plaid poplin bodice and a black wool skirt, but Mariette was quite smart, and of course the rest of us graced the occasion in our best frocks.

The Princess, stout, rather homely, but handsomely dressed, stood in the middle of the room, all graciousness and smiles, and the guests, one by one, were taken up and presented. Of course she had been coached beforehand and said something amiable and complimentary to each. When my turn came she took my hand and said with smiling *empressement*: ‘Oh, Mrs. Atherton, I have so enjoyed your wonderful books. They are all in my library, and I have brought them with me.’

I always refrained, when similarly attacked, from asking that fatal question: ‘Which do you like best?’ and in this case merely thanked her. But she rushed on to her doom. ‘I think I like these best; they are really great works.’ Whereupon she named six novels, not one of which had I written.

I didn’t enlighten her. The poor woman was practising her *salon* manner on me, and far be it from me to discourage her. It was a worthy object and I wished her success; I too had once been excruciatingly bored, and I too had lit out the moment I was free to get what I wanted.

France hated Germany with that deadliest of all hatreds that has its roots in fear, but Germany in her arrogance and might had only contempt for France. The shops carried nothing 'French.' In Munich the New Art was firmly believed to be superior to anything the ages had evolved elsewhere, hideous as it was, and in the draper-shops the models were Viennese; and so were the fashionable dress-makers.

But the smart women were less patriotic. They went to Paris for their gowns and even had their cards engraved La Baronne de or La Comtesse de So and So; Gräfin and Baronin were left to those benighted beings who wore the *reform-kleid*—shapeless garments, home-made for the most part, on shapeless soft-waisted bodies. Even the royal ladies had adopted it. The small fashionable group, who prided themselves upon ultra-smartness, were determined to differentiate themselves as much as possible, but they must have made a private bonfire of those cards in the summer of 1914.

## XXIX

MAUDE FAY conceived the brilliant idea of 'putting up a joke on Lambton.' She had insisted from the first that he might have served as model for Paul of *Three Weeks*. I could see no resemblance—nor could he!—and Elinor Glyn, had she known him, would have been rather amused. But Miss Fay insisted that he was really Paul, whether he realized it or not. Why not put him to the test? Reveal him to himself? At all events we would get a lot of fun out of it.

It will be remembered that the Queen heroine of *Three Weeks* had as yet given no heir to the kingdom, and as one, for reasons of State, was urgently necessary, and her husband incompetent, she set forth with the self-abnegation of a true queen, to hunt up a suitable father. In Venice she met a

handsome athletic high-bred young Englishman, and cast her nets, mainly while reclining on a tiger skin. Of course Paul fell madly in love with her and the result was all that could be desired.

The idea was that Lambton should be invited to my apartment on a certain night, shown into a darkened *salon*, his appreciative gaze greeted with a vision of loveliness reclining on a tiger skin spread on the floor at the far end of the room. Maude Fay, it need hardly be said, was to be the Queen, and Ruth Kelly, Mary Ayres, and myself, well concealed, the highly interested audience.

Of course he would guess at once that he was expected to play a part in a comedy. And what a part! He had almost ceased to blush when Miss Fay addressed him as Paul. He had a keen sense of drama and the role might appeal to him. Then again it mightn't! He hardly could be called enterprising. Personally I hoped the devil would enter into him and he would give Maude Fay a shock.

I told Lambton we were giving him a surprise party and he must arrive exactly on the minute. He was much interested but a little nervous. The rest of us were nearly exhausted when the great night arrived. For some inscrutable reason we were all to wear fancy dress. Possibly to keep Maude Fay in countenance, possibly to give the affair a touch of the bizarre. I doubt if we knew our reason then any better than I do now. As the comedy was to be followed by a supper I searched Munich over for a set of blue and white Bavarian china and blue and white lanterns for the dining-room. *Three Weeks* in a Bavarian setting! Maude Fay, after running all over Munich for three days, finally unearthed an old moth-eaten tiger skin, and then, as it failed to show up on the afternoon of the party, had to go for it herself, and we all lugged it up the stairs.

At last all was in order. Maude Fay, royally dressed and crowned, looking as beautiful as when impersonating Eliza-

beth or Elsa, extended herself on that malodorous tiger skin at least twenty times before we were all satisfied that she was in the most graceful and seductive pose a designing young queen in search of a prospective heir could accomplish. A queer role for Maude Fay, who was the most proper of mortals.

Ruth Kelly, her red luxuriant hair braided and twined about her ears, represented some Secessionist picture. Mary Ayres, a large rather handsome girl with a fine figure, sacrificed herself remorsefully to being a 'good sport.' Her hideous costume was copied from that worn by the switch-tenders of Munich: man's boots, red flannel petticoat above pantelettes, short skirt, dingy woollen shawl pinned behind, and small Tyrolean hat above a walnut of plastered hair. She even padded herself to look shapeless. As a costume, it was the triumph of the evening.

I was got up as the Bavarian flag, half blue, half white, and looked somewhat lop-sided. Boradil, attired as a mere maiden, was in the dinning-room attending to the lanterns, which were strung above the table, and, judging from her muttered imprecations, persisted in falling down.

The door bell rang. Maude Fay sank on her elbow. The other two girls hid behind the curtains. I plunged the room into semi-darkness and crawled under the table.

Lambton walked slowly down the hall and stood in the doorway. I was sufficiently hidden, but crouched where I could see him plainly. At first he looked merely bewildered. Then as his eyes became accustomed to the half-light an expression of positive horror invaded his always expressive features, as he made out the figure of a woman on a tiger skin at the end of the dim room. Only pride held him from flight.

I had expected this first reaction, but anticipated that pride would come to the rescue, and that as soon as he received his cue he would respond in some way, even if it

were only to take the situation humorously and turn the tables on us.

But where were those dulcet seductive tones that were to draw him, however reluctantly, across the room and to his knees beside that tiger skin? One could have cut that awful silence with the Malay creese that hung on the wall. Had Maude Fay lost her nerve? Maude Fay, of all women? An actress and a good one, who was as much at home on the stage as in her own *salon*! Were the roles reversed?

Lambton always held his arms better than anyone I ever knew. He now stood as if frozen, his arms at his sides, his crest rising. I knew he was angry, but that if given a cue, he would, through politeness if nothing else, make some attempt to play up, even if only to saunter forward drawling 'How splendid!'

But no cue came.

In turning my head to see what on earth was the matter with Maude Fay, I hit it against the top of the table; at the same time there was an agonized giggle behind the curtains – and the whole thing flopped. I crawled out and hissed at them. Lambton broke into nervous laughter. The switch-woman, in convulsions, rolled over on the queen, her boots pounding the poor old tiger skin. Maude Fay broke into voluble apologies; she had forgotten her lines. *Why?* Were we not all watching her? Snickering silently? If we'd stayed in the dining-room with Boradil she could have carried it off, but she hadn't had such an attack of stage-fright at her *début*.

I turned up the lights. Lambton expressed his appreciation of our costumes and our original ideas of entertainment in his best manner. We were all 'splendid.' He was secretly delighted at the *dénouement*. We had been served jolly well right. It was like him to come out on top!

However, the supper was a success, and the lanterns fell down on the table only twice.





## BOOK VII

IT is possible that if I had not lost my priceless house-keeper, Élise Palmert, I should have lingered on in Munich and been caught in the net of the War. But she had to go home to Leipzig to nurse her old father, and after a brief struggle with a moronic Bavarian I concluded that six years was long enough to live in any one place, and folded my tents. Élise had done more than run my household smoothly; she had saved me all unnecessary contacts, and even from taxation for five years.

At the end of the first year I received a notice to go to the Rathaus and pay my taxes, a small amount enough. I gave Élise the money and told her to settle the matter. She settled it in her own way. Appearing before the dignitary in the Rathaus with her hair standing on end and shaking her fists she poured out a torrent of reproaches for presuming to tax *meine Dame*, who would spend a goodly sum of money in Munich yearly and take not a pfennig out of it. 'It is the way to drive Americans out!' she cried with the contempt of the French Swiss for all things German. 'They have to pay taxes in their own country; will they not stay there then if they have to pay taxes here too? You are fools, and *meine Dame* will leave rather than pay taxes to keep up your army – which is nothing to her.'

The magistrate was so astounded at this tirade, unique in his experience, that he merely shrugged, said 'Oh, very well,' and tore up the bill. What would have happened if the stage had been Prussia is unpleasant to contemplate, but the Bavarians were good-natured and hated scenes, and Élise must have been rather terrifying. I heard nothing more of taxes until shortly before she left me, when I received

a bill with apologies; money was imperatively needed for the army. Élise paid it grudgingly, but had quite a pleasant little chat with the sympathetic magistrate.

I should have left Munich temporarily in any case, for it is always difficult to write of the past of a city when surrounded by its teeming present. *Tower of Ivory* was to be set in the 'eighties in order to include Ludwig II as well as certain conditions in England during that distinctive era, and perspective was desirable in space as in time. Moreover, Fassbender was to be the heroine – as far as personality and voice were concerned – and as she was to have a murky past it was wise to change conditions very markedly or run the risk of a libel suit.

I therefore betook myself to Mount Tamalpais in California.

This 'Mount' is some twenty-five hundred feet high, and, situated on the northern side of the Bay, commands a magnificent view not only of San Francisco but of the forests of Marin County, the towns and hills and far mountains on the eastern side of the Bay, and the Pacific Ocean. As it was a resort for many months of the year, the Tavern, close to the summit, had a fair restaurant and fifteen or twenty bedrooms. Few had ever spent more than a night there, and as I announced my intention of remaining throughout the winter they gave me the one room with a private bath and a stove, as there was no central heating.

The winter storms set in immediately. It stormed for fifty days and fifty nights. I wrote to the accompaniment of a tremendous orchestration of the elements, fit conditions for a novel inspired mainly by the music of Wagner. When those mighty winds stopped for an hour my brain stopped also, and remained torpid until that diatonic cacophony began again. I took my exercise in the long corridors, and certainly had a sufficiency of fresh air, as the Tavern leaked at all points. In fact I had to wear a fur coat. But it was a

tremendous experience and the violent contrast lent an added glamour to the always glamorous Munich. Perhaps it was owing to those conditions as well as to the fact that those later years in Munich remain in my mind as an almost perfect experience, that *Tower of Ivory* is my own favourite of all the novels I have written.

But winter turned abruptly into summer and I was obliged to leave. It was so hot that the rattlesnakes woke up from their winter sleep among the rocks and came out into the sun. One even invaded the bar. And people came up every afternoon on the little mountain train to witness the sunrise next morning. I was awakened by 'Ohs' and 'Ahs' as they hung out of their windows at four a.m. watching a blood-red sun rise above an imponderable sea of white fog that blotted out the valleys, the Bay, and even San Francisco on its hills.

As the scene of the book was about to be transferred to England I was ready to leave, and found a little hotel rebuilt among the ruins of San Francisco, very unfashionable, and far removed from any of my friends. Mr. Phelan routed me out occasionally, but for the most part I was undisturbed and finished my book during the summer.

I was now at a loose end and lingered on in San Francisco. Where I should 'settle' again I had not the least idea, but doubted if I could keep away from England for long.

However, San Francisco was sufficiently interesting. Not only because a new and far handsomer city was rising rapidly from the ruins, but because it was in the final and most exciting stages of the 'Graft Prosecution.' I have told the story of this momentous episode in *California: An Intimate History* and shall not repeat it here. It is enough to say that it was initiated by Rudolph Spreckels and Mr. Phelan – financed by them as well – to drive malefactors from office, delete graft from politics, and clean out the stables generally. The United States Government had

loaned them the famous detective, William Burns, and the prosecuting attorney, Francis Heney, was a brilliant and honest lawyer. Fremont Older of the *Evening Bulletin* risked his life daily with his thunders, and the *Morning Call* was sympathetic if less militant.

The city talked of little else, despite rebuilding and renewal of business, and seethed with angry passions. Mr. Older had been kidnapped, and Mr. Heney shot in the court room. Mr. Phelan and Mr. Spreckels were now outcasts from Society, for they had involved in their net some of the wealthiest and most influential men of the city. Patrick Calhoun, a social luminary and a man of great personal popularity, was on trial at the moment.

My own circle was very much abridged. It was a time when no one could sit judicially on the fence; if you did not come out voluntarily with an opinion you would soon be forced into a corner and commanded to give utterance. A good many of my friends were among those threatened with prosecution for bribing Ruef, Schmitz, and the Board of Supervisors, but I was convinced that this small and valiant group were in the right and threw in my lot with them. Besides, it is always more fun to run with the minority, whether they are likely to win or not. In this case, although they had got rid of Ruef and his creatures, it was doubtful if with millions to bribe juries they could convict even Patrick Calhoun.

The only persons of social eminence who stood by Mr. Phelan and Mr. Spreckels were the Frank Carolans, the William Denmans and Miss Alice Hager (a daughter of one of my mother's old suitors!). Therefore, the small company that met so constantly at Mr. Phelan's dinner table for mutual sympathy and support were the Carolans, the Denmans, Mr. and Mrs. Heney, Mr. and Mrs. Fremont Older (quite the handsomest couple in San Francisco), Miss Hager and myself. Mrs. Older did more to keep up the

spirits of the men than anyone else. She was also full of resource. The Downey Harveys were sympathetic but living at Del Monte. Mr. Harvey had invested the greater part of his fortune in a scenic railway down the coast, but after the disaster to San Francisco no one was interested in scenic railways and new resorts, and he and others involved in the scheme had lost so much money they were forced to live in retirement for a while.

After Mr. Heney was shot Hiram Johnson conducted the prosecution until he was well again, and was rewarded by being elected Governor of the State. And if it proved to be impossible to convict the 'higher-ups,' at least the decent instincts of the community were so thoroughly aroused that San Francisco has been rather tame ever since.

## I I

It was during that year I first met Northcliffe. He and Lady Northcliffe were travelling in California and Mr. and Mrs. Older, who lived at the Fairmont Hotel, gave them a dinner. In looks he was of the same round-face boyish type as Lord Rosebery and Winston Churchill, but far more genial than either. He did most of the talking and we were only too willing to forget our troubles and listen to him discourse on the affairs of Europe. San Franciscans had almost forgotten that Europe existed, and internationalism interested them far less than that Ruef was in State Prison and Mr. Heney's would-be assassin had been shot mysteriously in his cell.

Northcliffe talked as much about the United States, which he had been observing closely for several months, as of Europe. 'Your big cities are like a lot of islands,' he said. 'San Francisco is by no means unique. When you are in New York, Chicago, Boston, Washington, you barely hear

any other city mentioned. Each ignores the others, and would seem to exist as independently of the rest of the country as if indeed all were islands somewhere out, in the waters.' And again: 'The Americans stand more abuses in a month than we would stand in ten years, but when they do wake up they are as swift and thorough as one of their own cyclones.'

Northcliffe during his lifetime was the most popular of all Britishers in the United States, and doubtless this was owing as much to the abiding interest he took in us as to his personality.

Mrs. Fiske was playing in San Francisco that autumn. I had met her when she had kept house in the country with Ashton and Alecc during the summer after the earthquake, and I naturally called on her. But I soon wished I had not, fascinating as she was off as on the stage. She was possessed by the idea that I could write a play. Would I not write one for her at once? She was badly in need of a play.

A good many other actresses had made the same request. It is a curious fact that if you can write dramatic scenes in a novel every one connected with the stage is positive that you are an undeveloped playwright; all that is necessary is to sit down at your desk and write dialogue instead of narrative. In vain I told Mrs. Fiske as I had told others that I was the only living novelist who didn't want to write plays. That if I had been born with that particular group of brain cells I should have been writing plays all my life instead on novels and stories. Mrs. Fiske had that tenacity of purpose which is one of the chief ingredients of all success, and gave me no peace until I consented to make the effort.

I ground out an act. The scene was laid in the West Indies – on Nevis; but the theme was the Militant Women of England! Odd combination, but Mrs. Fiske wanted that theme and I wanted Nevis.

When I finished the act I submitted it to her hopefully;

sure that she would condemn it and leave me free to go to England. But to my utter discomfiture she was enthusiastic, and insisted that I finish the play at once; Europe could wait. So I rolled up my sleeves and groaned at my desk until somehow or other two more acts dribbled out of my remonstrant head. I was convinced it was the worst play ever written and events proved I was not far from right.

But when I rejoined Mrs. Fiske in Chicago, where Ashton and Aleece were now living, I found that Mrs. Fiske's enthusiasm was undiminished. I turned hopefully to Mr. Fiske. Surely he, as a successful manager of many years' standing, must see that it was nothing but a story told in dialogue and had about as much 'theatre sense' in it as there was in 'Mary had a little lamb.'

What he really thought of that play I never knew, but always suspected that he was merely indulging Mrs. Fiske in what he no doubt regarded as a whim. He even assured me that after being tried out on the road it would be produced in New York with an all-star cast and blurbed as written by America's most intellectual novelist for America's most intellectual actress. But then, of course, it was safe to assure me of anything, and he always liked to make himself agreeable.

At all events I got some fun out of it. It was a delightful experience travelling with Mrs. Fiske 'on the road.' She had a private car and a charming company, and I saw more of her than ever before or since. She was the stage's chief hermit. That alone was an experience, for she was a unique personality.

Every day the play was rehearsed in some theatre when there were no matinées, and as it came to life in those capable hands, and as all the other actors seemed as interested as Mrs. Fiske, I concluded it was not so bad after all.

But I was disillusioned on the night of its production in Montreal. I never was so bored at a play in my life, and



was merely grateful next morning when the critics slashed it unmercifully; I wanted my career as a dramatist to end then and there. When Mrs. Fiske suggested that I rewrite it I put my foot down. 'I know what I can do and what I cannot,' I told her, 'and I am no playwright. I won't waste another day on it. Put it in the ash-bin.'

### I I I

BUT that play, bad as it was, suggested another novel.

The women of the United States, admirably organized, were now engaged in a nation-wide campaign to win the franchise. I took no active part in it, for that would have meant making speeches, than which I could think of nothing I'd hate more, and I had my own work to do. I had joined Mrs. Mackay's organization in New York on condition she would ask nothing further of me, and had consented to be known as vice-president of one in San Francisco on the same terms, although I did write several articles for the newspapers at the request of the committee.

Now I had an inspiration to do something for the cause in my own way. I would write a novel on this burning theme and endeavour to make the movement attractive to the hostile or indifferent. Hitherto I had written for my own pleasure and the public could take it or leave it; I had regarded the propaganda novel as an insult to art, but now I was fired with a holy enthusiasm to do something for my downtrodden sex! I had always resented the calm assumption of men that they were the superior sex, and their very real dominance. All my adverse critics had been men, and they had displayed an almost childish sex-enmity; I had succeeded in spite of them, and it was up to me to use what influence I might have to help liberate those unequipped by nature to conquer life for themselves. Well, it was the

last time as the first. Propaganda should be confined to pamphlets and the Press; it has no place in fiction.\*

Although the longer I lived abroad the more American I became, I preferred laying the scenes of my books in Europe, and as I was glad of any excuse to go to England I went there at once to make a study of the Militant Movement at first hand. It was now at its height, and, to the dispassionate observer, far more exciting than the campaign in America. Owing to the careless indulgence of American men to their wives and daughters it was hardly possible for the women of the United States to rise to the pitch of fury of those whose grievances had festered for generations, and their struggle for political power was conducted with a calm efficiency that was admirable but hardly dramatic.

For several years I had stayed when in London at Hall's Hotel in Cork Street, W. That was really a private hotel, so private that there was no parlour downstairs nor even a restaurant; the meals were served in one's sitting-room. And so respectable that the sitting-rooms were on one floor and the bedrooms on another. The food, served in style by a frigid butler of the best tradition, was uninteresting; there were no telephones in the rooms, no lifts and no private baths. But it was so exclusive that you had to be as well-recommended as the butler himself. My English publisher, Mr. Murray, had suggested it, and I had gone back several times, partly on account of its centrality, partly because, despite its drawbacks, it had a homelike atmosphere, the service was assiduous, and more *personal* than I have ever known elsewhere.

But now, I decided, it was time for a change.

I had always liked the looks of Queen Anne's Mansions in Westminster, an immense gloomy pile that resembled an ancient fortress. When I arrived in London, however, I was told that I couldn't get a suite for two or three weeks and

went to the Ritz meanwhile. There I had an experience both amusing and annoying.

There was another Mrs. Atherton in England, and she was never spoken of otherwise; I never heard her first name nor her husband's. During my earlier visits she was a brilliant figure in Society and always referred to as the 'best-dressed woman in London.' Her costumes were frequently described in the weekly sheets devoted to the doings of the great, and the American correspondents, who knew little of London Society from the inside, took for granted that I was the heroine of those complimentary paragraphs, and, when they had nothing better to write about, gave all the sartorial details. This sent my stock up in my home country, always worshipful of monetary success; they must have thought my books were selling by the million – unless they thought something else.

But it was quite another matter when 'Mrs. Atherton' became a public scandal. There had been a great deal of whispered gossip about her, for she seems to have been a woman of supreme fascination and irresistible to men; owing to her vivid colouring and charm of expression she ranked as a 'beauty,' although her features were far below the classic standard of the notable beauties of England. But, as I have said before, London Society cares nothing for moral lapses if they are accompanied by discretion. She was laudably discreet for a number of years. Then came the South-African War and she went to the Cape with her husband, Captain Atherton, a dignified soldier absorbed in his profession, quite unaware of his wife's little games.

In Cape Town she became involved in a flagrant scandal and Captain Atherton would have divorced her had it not been for the intervention of that social dictator, the then Prince of Wales (King Edward). She returned to London, however, under a cloud with no silver lining and, as all doors were closed in her face and she consoled herself recklessly,

it was not long before some outraged wife named her as co-respondent in a suit for divorce. Captain Atherton then washed his hands of her publicly, and this time the Prince made no remonstrance. No woman had ever been more notoriously a social outcast.

After that she was the heroine of one scandal after another, and heaven knows how many times she appeared in the divorce courts as co-respondent. The term gold-digger had not been invented, but there is none better to describe her, for her victims were either men of recent fortune or rich foolish youngsters.

She had given me a good deal of trouble. My visiting cards were inscribed simply Mrs. Atherton, and, sometimes, when upon my arrival in London I left them in accordance with custom upon those who had shown me hospitality but were still mere acquaintances, they were ignored, and I soon learned it was assumed they had been left by 'that creature trying to push herself in.'

I was puzzled what to do about it. I could not resurrect George at this late date, and 'Mrs. Gertrude Atherton' was unthinkable. I wished heartily that she would either die or change her name. She did both a few years later, for when a young husband deserted her she blew off the top of her head with a shot-gun.

But meanwhile she was a nuisance. This time when I arrived in London I wrote notes to my friends as usual, but hesitated to leave cards on those I knew less well; it is not pleasant to be ignored, whatever the reason. And then I hit upon the idea of sending a line to the society announcement column of the *Morning Post*, stating that Mrs. Atherton, the American novelist, was in London and would be at the Ritz for a few weeks. Surely that was indubious enough; whatever crimes my namesake had committed she had never been accused of writing anything but imprudent letters that landed her periodically in the courts.

But while that announcement achieved the desired result as far as my large circle of acquaintances was concerned, there was another upon which I hadn't reckoned.

It would seem that 'Mrs. Atherton' had been absent from London for a time while her army of admirers pined in vain. Every few days a card was brought up to my room inscribed with the name of some man I had never heard of. In vain I sent down word there was a mistake in identity; the page-boy returned with insistent messages. Evidently the gentlemen were used to the beauty's caprices and knew the virtue of persistence. Also, they must have been afflicted with myopia.

Again and again I went downstairs – to be greeted with an expression of blank or bitter disappointment.

Something must be said for her taste; I never saw a procession of handsomer nor more distinguished-looking men. Many of them were army officers – guardsmen! – who were apparently more faithful to her than to their old comrade in arms. And no doubt when not engaged in gold-digging she distributed her favours gratuitously.

I was glad to move, and took care to put no more announcements in the *Morning Post*.

## I V

IF Queen Anne's Mansions were gloomy and fortress-like without, the rooms were cheerful, and mine had all the sun there was. But there were drawbacks. There was then no central heating and the fires were not made until half-past eight in the morning, nor could one order breakfast before that hour. I have always been an early riser and liked a cup of tea at seven. I therefore bought tea, biscuits, and the necessary apparatus, and, as the rooms were frozen until the fires were made, I turned on the hot water in the bath and brewed my tea there. The steam melted the biscuits and

sometimes was so dense that I hardly could see the cup as I lifted it, but Americans must not expect too much of England.

The British had a confused idea of American drinks. One night an Englishman, who had visited the United States several times, was dining with me and I asked the head waiter if he knew how to make cocktails. His manner, as he replied 'Certainly, madam,' conveyed that I had insulted the British Empire. He arrived presently with two reddish concoctions in liqueur glasses. We tasted them and wrinkled our noses. 'A weird mixture, this,' I said. 'Suppose we find out what it is made of.' I summoned the man again and asked him. 'Scotch and raspberry syrup, madam,' he replied proudly! Doubtless they know better now.

Before launching upon the stormy sea of Votes for Women I succumbed to the pleasures of London for a time and went about among my friends. At the Wilberforces' I met the famous Lady Dorothy Nevill; she had been a tremendous gun in her time but was now very old and seldom went anywhere. A feeble little old woman, dressed in the style of some past generation, with that rag-bag look that seems peculiar to the aristocratic relics of Europe, there was nothing left to impress a stranger save her name. She had little to say to anyone and only a few words to me, and it was natural to contrast her with the Baroness Burdett-Coutts, who still had the power to interest at ninety.

I also met Somerset Maugham at the Wilberforces', who entertained constantly in their beautiful old house in Dean's Yard. I sat next to him at a luncheon, but he too had little to say and was quite as superior as Thomas Mann. He and the Dutch novelist Maarten Maartens (Van der Poorten Schwatz) were the handsomest authors one met about London. Maartens, although his novels of Dutch life were rather machine-made, was having quite a vogue; but socially, at all events, his good looks, breeding, and charming manners had a good deal more to do with it than his books.

The literary personnel of London had changed greatly since the late 'nineties. Bernard Shaw was now a popular playwright and an oracle. He had acquired a rich wife, who, however, was so much impressed by his flaming socialism that she dismissed her maid; she would be as good a socialist as her great husband, and what part had lady's-maids in a life of self-abnegation to a Cause? At the end of a fortnight, however, he ordered her peremptorily to engage another: 'he was a busy man and had no time to waste buttoning her up the back.' Socialism is all very well for rich men to play with, but theory is one thing and practice another.

A good many of those old luminaries were dead and others forgotten. Two rising stars of the first magnitude were well above the horizon. Arnold Bennett had written *The Old Wives' Tale*, and John Galsworthy *A Man of Property*. H. G. Wells had renounced scientific romance for sociological realism and had a large following. Much to my regret I never met Arnold Bennett, whom I admired *d'outrance*, nor Galsworthy until several years later. But I had met Wells in my earlier London days at one of those immense annual dinners given by the Authors' Society, where dull speeches were made and poor food consumed. I had never dreamed there were so many authors in the world, male and female, until I attended my first of those dinners.

I was crossing the room to my table when someone brought up Wells and introduced him. Before I could say 'How do you do?' he ran his hand through his rather dusty hair and told me that he had begun life as a floor-walker; I stood there for ten minutes listening to the story of his life and not getting in a word edgewise. He had nothing of the social popularity it need hardly he said, of Maarten Maartens, an inferior thinker if better craftsman, but the social graces are often frightened off by genius.

I met Northcliffe again and he reminded me of Mr.

Phelan in his hospitality. He wanted to place a car at my disposal during my sojourn in London, but not being anxious to identify myself further with my enterprising namesake, I declined.

The Northcliffes occupied a rather modest house in London, but entertained a great deal and I had some pleasant times there. They had several country places but I visited only one of them and then for the day; I had grown wary of English country houses and saw all I cared for of any of them on a Sunday.

Sutton Hall was Northcliffe's latest acquisition, and I spent a Sunday there. It was a beautiful old house built in the time of Henry VIII, and furnished by Lady Northcliffe, who had impeccable taste, in the style of the period. Northcliffe was always very gay and boyish in his own house, and altogether one of the most charming men I have ever met.

Lady St. Helier still entertained lavishly, but tragedy had shattered her private life. Sir Francis, who was proud of the name he had made, was reluctant to change it for a peerage and only did so that he might leave an imposing title to his idolized son, an officer in a crack regiment. Shortly after, when he was going through a mass of papers relating to an impending divorce suit that promised to be a *cause célèbre*, he came across evidence that threatened to implicate his son. There was but one thing to do and he did it with all possible speed. Before the young man knew what was happening to him he was out of England and on his way to join a regiment in India. But, alas, although the family honour was saved, his life was the forfeit; he had barely reached Calcutta when he was stricken with fever and died. It killed his father, and for a time it looked as if Lady St. Helier would follow them both. But Time did its work; she gave up the house in Harley Street, which, she told me, was 'full of ghosts,' took another and opened her doors once more. Fortunately she still had two daughters,



and, after all, entertaining had been the passion of her life.

## V

I MET Sargent at the Marlboroughs', who had built a large house in Curzon Street, not unlike a mammoth packing-box. A rather burly man with a full red face, he looked more like a brewer than a psychological portrait painter. He did not get my name nor I his and as we sat beside each other at luncheon and were obliged to talk, we floundered about for some time trying to find a theme of common interest. Finally, how, heaven knows, we hit upon the subject of plumbing in Paris! Then he grew quite animated. I met him several times after and he invited me to his studio in Chelsea, but he had little personality and I never found him interesting. But all artists seemed colourless after Whistler.

Several years before, Frederick Scott Oliver had written a monograph on Alexander Hamilton, with the object of impressing upon his countrymen the advantages of federation. Hugh Chisholm of *The Times*, and editor of the revised *Encyclopædia Britannica*, asked me to write something about it in the *North American Review* when it came out in the United States. I should have been glad to do so in any case, for it was an admirable piece of work, but was the more amiably disposed as the author had paid a handsome tribute to *The Conqueror* in his preface.

Both Mr. Chisholm and Mr. Oliver were immensely amused when that review was published. I had written that one of the most fascinating things about the book was its atmosphere of scholarly leisure; one could visualize the author in the seclusion of his library, doubtless in the depths of the country, dwelling lovingly upon each polished sentence and apt turn of phrase. *Par excellence*, he was a man of letters.

In a letter I received from Hugh Chisholm I could hear

him laugh all the way across the Atlantic. Mr. Oliver, I was informed, was manager of Debenham and Freebody, one of the largest department stores in London. And, so scant was his leisure, he had written the book in snatches during holidays, week ends, and even in the Underground while travelling to and from his house. He had been educated at Cambridge, and intended, after finishing his law studies, to embark upon a political career, but his father lost his money and he was obliged to go to work.

Mr. Oliver wrote to me: 'I am *not* a man of letters, but a man of business – somewhat in the same line as old Nicolas Cruger. I am very well aware that it was an act of presumption on my part to write of Hamilton with so little real knowledge of history; but I was urged to do it because I thought my country needed to have the principles of his great statesmanship set before it at the present juncture of our affairs.'

Well, some brains are made like that. Oliver was *born* a man of letters, whatever his immediate condition; doubtless he wrote out of inherited brain-cells further developed by studious years at Cambridge.

He called on me after my return to London, and I think it was during this last visit that I lunched at his house and met Arthur Lee, who told us a story so amazingly illustrative of the indigenous snobbery of human nature that I have never forgotten it.

Situated somewhere in the purlieus of South London was the greatest slaughter-house in England. London, in its immensity, is a city of violent contrasts, and it is possible that the majority of its inhabitants knew nothing of that slaughter-house and the wild amazons employed there. Mr. Lee's sister, who was interested in social work, had heard of these women and their need of a civilizing influence. But she was unprepared for what she saw and learned when she paid the place a tentative visit.

Those women were as savage as if they were roaming the jungles of Borneo, instead of living on the fringe of the most civilized city in the world. Immense of stature, far stronger than the average man, and not ill-looking, they were so ignorant they were unaware there was a king in England, much less a peerage, nor had they ever so much as seen a school-house. They worked with the untiring persistence of dray horses, slaughtering and skinning, and their only recreations were drinking in the public house and fighting one another or their lovers in hours of leisure. Splashed with blood, they were a hideous sight in the immense reeking slaughter-house.

Miss Lee was dismayed but not discouraged. All the more need of her efforts.

She rented a building in the neighbourhood, had it scrubbed and whitewashed, furnished it tastefully, sent down a gramophone, a piano, magic lanterns, and other contrivances for entertainment which she hoped would be both amusing and uplifting. Friends promised to join her occasionally to sing, play, and lecture.

Gently and tactfully these young barbarians would be led from darkness into light, and, when the time was ripe, induced to submit to the ordeal of learning the alphabet.

Infinite possibilities.

Meanwhile the superintendent of the vast establishment had told the women of the delights in store for them, and they were stolidly excited. It would be their first contact with the outside world, and although they had barely known that such a world existed they were human after all and thrilled at the prospect of variety. The superintendent did his best to instruct them in the rudiments of behaviour, in what the word 'lady' meant, devoutly hoping they would not tear Miss Lee to pieces if her refinement and her clothes excited their resentment. She was truly interested in their welfare, he urged. She couldn't help her appearance.

It was just before the house was in order, and Miss Lee was down on a Sunday giving the final touches, that the superintendent came in and informed her that a deputation of the women insisted upon an interview. What they wanted he had been unable to ascertain, but they had promised to behave themselves and he would be within call.

They arrived in a few moments, eight strapping young women, comparatively clean, with kerchiefs pinned about their heads. They refused to sit down but stood before Miss Lee with arms akimbo, looking somewhat belligerent. As Mr. Lee said, their remarks must be freely translated, for they spoke an uncouth dialect. Only once did they remember to address their hostess as ma'am.

The largest and most formidable of the eight had evidently been chosen spokeswoman. She lost no time getting down to business.

'Do we understand - ma'am - that you've taken this house for us and expect us to come here once a week?'

'On Saturday nights and Sundays,' said Miss Lee smoothly and wondering what was coming. 'It will give me great pleasure to know you better and do what I can to amuse you. My friends will help me, and on Saturday nights you may dance if you will. I do hope to make you happy.'

The amazon brushed this aside. 'What I want to know is - do you expect all of us?'

'Why, of course. These rooms are quite large.'

'All of us? Every girl in that slaughter-house?'

'Certainly.'

'And all at the same time?'

'Yes. Why not?'

'And do you think,' bellowed the amazon, digging her elbows into her hips, 'do you *imagine for a moment* that girls who kill and skin and saw legs off cattle will sit in the same room with girls who clean the guts and work on hogs? What do you take us for? You'll have them at one

time and *us* at another or *we* don't come at all. And we want that understood right now.'

And this from women who had never heard that kings and courts and 'classes' existed. Miss Lee, however, was equal to the emergency. She assured them that lines of caste should be meticulously observed, and turned them into a deputation then and there to separate the sheep from the goats. It was a recent experiment and I never heard how it turned out. But polite education would hardly eradicate that nice instinct for social differentiations.

Sir Frank Swettenham had returned from a long and distinguished service in the Malay States, and as he was much in vogue I met him frequently. He was almost black from nearly forty years of tropic suns, and so dried up that he looked not unlike an animated mummy. But he was very much alive and an interesting partner at table. He liked to talk about Joseph Conrad, whom he had known well in Asia. 'He is obliged to write every book six times,' he told me. 'First he tumbles out a mass of words, incoherent even to himself but bristling with ideas. Then, laboriously, he straightens them out, until he has something like a skeleton to work on. Then he pulls them this way and that until his events are arranged in order. Then he dives into his characters and brings them to life. The last two revisions are devoted to polishing up his style.'

One other thing he told me was even more interesting. The shipwreck scene in *Lord Jim* will never be forgotten by anyone who has read it, and is one of the finest in all literature. No one has ever suspected that it could have been finer still.

It seems that it was built upon fragments of an authentic incident of the sea that Conrad had picked up in his wanderings, and that the eight hundred pilgrims bound for Mecca were really on board. Unfortunately the most dramatic

incident of that shipwreck did not come to Conrad's knowledge until too late, and, oddly enough, even his commanding imagination failed to conceive it. When all hope was abandoned, and the ship was expected to founder at any moment, the pilgrims put on their grave clothes and disposed themselves in long rows on the deck. There they lay, resigned, chanting, until the ship made its final plunge beneath the waves. What a scene Conrad could have made of that!!

## V I

AFTER playing about for a few weeks I turned my attention to the object of this particular visit to London.

Sophy Hall, although she still looked like a flower, and had as many admirers as ever, had become an ardent feminist. I doubt if she would have been more than aware that such a movement existed, even though her lively mind was interested in everything, had it not been for her intimacy with Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck. This young woman, a human dynamo, with not a personal grievance in the world, but bound to find some outlet for her energies, had thrown herself heart and soul into the cause, and carried her friends along with her. Fundamentally, no doubt, it was a craving for adventure, legitimately inherited.

Another pecrage romance.

The second son of one of the former Dukes of Somerset, and heir presumptive to the title, as his brother was an invalid, was a wild and turbulent soul, always roving the world in search of adventure. Wherever there was a war he was miraculously on the spot, and when there was no opportunity to fight he sought excitement in remote places returning to his disapproving and oft-distracted parents at long intervals only.

One day, however, he turned up with a bride and an-

nounced that he had had enough of adventure and intended to settle down for life.

And the bride was a peasant girl from the Spanish Pyrenees!

At first, very naturally, the duke and duchess were horrified. But they soon recovered; not only were they thankful to get their son back on any terms, but the girl was beautiful and sweet and adaptable, and as she had all the natural dignity and reserve of the Spanish of any class, she was turned into an authentic great lady in no time. Two children, a boy and a girl, were born, and everybody was happy. No cat was ever more domesticated than the erstwhile prodigal.

But one cannot racket about the world acquiring wounds and fever germs and expect to live to a green old age. While the duke was still hale and hearty the younger man succumbed to a recurrent bout of malaria. It was the family lawyer who asked for the marriage certificate of the dead heir in order that the little boy's rights to the succession should be confirmed at once. No certificate was to be found. The disconsolate widow had never seen it. She could tell them the name of her village, of the priest who had married her, but nothing more. Who the witnesses were – if, indeed, such formality had been observed – she could not remember, and her parents were dead.

The lawyer himself set off post-haste to obtain from the priest a certificate of lawful marriage. But he returned without it. The church had been burned down with all the records, and the priest was dead. The villagers recalled with indifference that one of their girls had married an Englishman, but no witnesses came forward.

The old couple were distracted. They adored the little boy, and it was tragedy, no less, that he should pay the price of his father's carelessness. But titles and estates may be claimed only by the properly certified, and although there

was not the shadow of a doubt regarding the boy's legitimacy, that was not enough to satisfy the laws that govern the House of Lords. Socially, the children were safe, but legally they were illegitimate.

The duke did all he could. He gave the boy one of his titles and an unentailed property, and settled a handsome income on the girl – who in due course married Frederick Cavendish-Bentinck, of the Duke of Portland's family.

Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck showed her Spanish blood. In fact she looked even more like a gipsy – and strangely like our own Katherine Duer Mackay, who inherited her dark beauty from the 'black Wards' of Scotland, throwing back to the trekking 'Mediterraneans' of prehistoric times. She was tall, dashing, very handsome, and she and Sophy Hall were always so well dressed that they looked like anything but 'fighting females.'

Mrs. Hall contented herself with subscribing liberally to the cause, attending meetings, public and select, and contributing moral support. But Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck was a true Militant. She made fiery speeches, marched at the head of parades, stormed the House of Commons, and once stayed out all night for some reason I have forgotten.

Poor Mr. Cavendish-Bentinck! A perfect type of the hunting squire, he retreated to the country after vain remonstrance. I only met him once and then he delivered himself forcibly of 'the whole damn nonsense.' Otherwise they seemed to be a devoted couple!

I was launched by this group into the midst of things, read the pamphlets and newspapers of the Woman's Social and Political Union, attended meetings at the Albert Hall and other places where Mrs. Pankhurst, her daughters, Christabel and Sylvia, Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, and Annie Kenney held forth with varying eloquence.

The halls were always crowded to the roof, and it was growing more and more fashionable to attend these meet-



ings, for women of title, and others of Society besides Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck and Mrs. Hall had joined the ranks, and many of them even went to prison and were fed through the nose; all Militants, these days, when run in by some indignant policeman who had had his own nose punched, went on the 'hunger-strike.'

I met all the leaders, but, aside from Mrs. Cavendish-Bentinck, the only one I did not actively dislike was Mrs. Pethick-Lawrence, a handsome comfortable-looking woman and charming in manner. Mrs. Pankhurst always fixed me with a glacial eye and permitted me to understand that she had no use for mere novelists who gave little evidence of being eager to die for the cause.

Barring the two hyphenated ladies those Militant Women all looked hard, sexless, selfless, ruthless. They had grim mouths, clairvoyant eyes, were worn to the proportions of a shingle, and filled with a cold enthusiasm that had drained their egos of all human feeling and left them pure brain. They were fanatics on ice. Even the grey-faced girls, speaking at street corners, looked the embodiment of cold intellect and had about as much charm as an embryo in a bottle.

Nevertheless, they were admirable. Fanatics but never losing their sanity. Nothing could be more logical than their arguments, their general procedure. Every gesture, from heckling some unfortunate politician on his platform, to smashing windows and hitting M.P.'s over the head with umbrellas, was calculated. Every word they uttered in public was the product of thought, not of passion. They were detestable as women, but as scientific martyrs they were a commanding success. War or no war it was inevitable they should win in the end. But it was ironic that the first woman elected to the House of Commons should be, not Mrs Pankhurst who had led her army to victory, but an American who had taken no part in the fray.

## V I I

I INTENDED to write the book in San Francisco, but began it in Frankfort, where Marcia Van Dresser was to make her début in grand opera. I spent a pleasant month there with her and Toto Norman; Leila von Meister was near-by in Wiesbaden; and when I paid a brief visit to Munich I saw the Cerrinis (for the last time) and Maude Fay, who reigned at the Hof as lyric soprano until driven out with other Americans by the War. The Hindenburgs had been transferred to The Hague, where I had visited them shortly before.

I wrote somewhat desultorily in the mornings. We were all too excited over Marcia's début to think about much else, and Marcia was an agreeable contrast to look at after those burnt-out females in London. I was rather weary for the moment of feminism and needed a long perspective on it.

The opera house was crowded on the night of Marcia's début in *Aida*. It was known that she was a pupil of Bosetti and Jean de Reszke, very beautiful and highly accomplished. Frau von Meister had pulled many wires and was present in a box she had filled with personages. All the fashion of Frankfort had turned out.

Marcia looked lovely as Aida – as we all know, most Aidas looked like darky chamber-maids or Hottentots – and sang beautifully. But her voice, exquisite as it was, was not of grand opera dimensions, and was rather lost in that big auditorium. She pleased the Frankfurters, however, and sang there until the War broke out. After that she achieved an equal success in concert and drawing-room.

I returned to California. Despite the remonstrances of my family and friends, I went once more to the ugly, but comfortable, little hotel among the ruins of San Francisco. Rebuilding was going ahead vigorously, but was confined, for the most part, to the business districts.

The long perspective did its work, and I was soon absorbed in my heroine, who, born on Nevis, was translated to England by a husband forced upon her by an ambitious old mother because he was heir presumptive to a dukedom. It was a long time before I got round to the Grim Crusaders. I think I baulked as long as 'Julia France' did! 'But after an extended period of disillusionment with all things male and a truly horrific husband in particular, she flung herself into the war for deliverance partly in quest of distraction, more to compensate herself for other failures with a career.

Nobody liked that book. It fell between three stools. The English feminists were indignant because the heroine 'went through the Movement and out of it,' marrying an American instead of going to prison and being fed through the nose; the American crusaders resented the fact that the scene was England and none of their own leaders exploited; the general public on both sides of the water didn't care to read about Votes for Women in a novel; they had enough of that subject in the newspapers. Nevertheless, it was admitted that *Julia France and Her Times* gave a comprehensive picture of the movement in England, and is still referred to occasionally. I have no love for it myself.

## V I I I

HOWEVER, the book was no sooner sent off to the publishers than I forgot about it. Little I anticipated when I returned to California bent upon solitude and the peaceful enterprise of writing about stormy events that I was to be plunged into a new field of activity. A mere hint and I should have avoided my native State as if it had been in the constant throes of an earthquake, and I took good care never to be caught in the same way again. But here I was and there was no escape.

Woodrow Wilson was nominated for the Presidency and there was a fair chance that he would win his way to the White House. 'Fair' was the word, however; the Democrats had been out of office for many years, and the Republicans were strong in the land. Wilson had a fine record as President of Princeton University and Governor of the State of New Jersey, and was respected as an executive and as a man. If he had been the Republican nominee he would have won hands down, but as it was, there would be a hard and bitter fight.

It may seem incredible now, but at that time Mr. Wilson was practically unknown even as a name in California. Northcliffe was quite accurate in saying that our leading cities were like so many self-contained islands, but he might have gone further and said the same thing of the States. What was New Jersey to Californians? A mere pin spot on the map.

I was dining at the Harveys – now living in San Francisco – when Mr. Phelan was called to the telephone and informed that Wilson had received the nomination. Being an ardent Democrat, and knowing the inadequacies of the other aspirants, he was immensely pleased that a man of Wilson's calibre should have won the nomination despite the powerful factions opposed to him. It was a great, an unprecedented, triumph for 'a gentleman and a scholar' over bareface politicians.

Mr. Phelan was far too restless to return to dinner-table conversation, and announced his intention to drive down town and address the crowds. He well knew that California voters would have to be told who Woodrow Wilson was! He invited me to go with him and we went down to the neighbourhood of Union Square, where the crowds were moving homeward after awaiting the Convention returns.

He made several speeches standing up in the open car. They were listened to respectfully, but merely because it was

Mr. Phelan speaking; it was quite apparent that to the Democratic nominee the audiences were profoundly indifferent and more than one remarked audibly that he had never heard of the man. What was the idea of nominating for the Presidency a schoolmaster of a little Eastern State, instead of someone who had made a name for himself as a politician? The American public likes its personalities ready made.

And it was Mr. Phelan's job to turn Wilson into a personality! The Californians must be educated into admiration for and confidence in a man who made no appeal to the imagination. And not only must the Democrats be aroused sufficiently to work for victory but as many Republican converts made as possible. California was a Republican State, and Democrats alone, even if united, would never carry it. There was encouragement in the fact that the Republican party was disrupted, for Roosevelt was running on an independent ticket.

Mr. Phelan was a born organizer, and he had Charles Fay, who knew every twist and turn of politics, to help him. He assumed the chieftainship of the Democratic party in California without opposition. Not only was he immensely popular and respected, but he was probably the only Democrat in the State who had any money. All the Big Business men were Republicans and seemed to be magnets for the various sources of the country's wealth. Of course he financed the campaign. He was also a brilliant, suave, persuasive, earnest, witty, and humorous speaker, to whom Republicans as well as Democrats always turned out to listen.

He worked night and day. Every one of any prominence who voted the Democratic ticket was pressed into service. It was not long before he turned his attention to me!

The American women had won the franchise, and those belonging to the Democratic party in California formed powerful organizations to fight for Woodrow Wilson. I had

no politics whatever, and cared for one party as little as for the other; both seemed to me equally selfish and contradictory, and I had privately made up my mind to vote always for the 'best man.' As my grandfather had been a Democrat I had a slight leaning to that party – which is all that a good many politicians, male and female, amount to. When, in an unguarded moment, I admitted to Mr. Phelan that I supposed I was a Democrat – if anything – he pounced upon me immediately.

Of course I was a Democrat! Was I not a woman of proved intelligence? And who could help the cause more in California? I must speak all over the State. People would come to hear me out of curiosity and then I could convince them with my eloquence!

I protested in horror that I had never made a speech in my life and never had wanted to make one. That I had always vowed I'd never be a 'platform woman.' I might as well have addressed the winds of San Francisco, still blowing from all points of the compass at once. He was as implacable as Mrs. Fiske.

Fruitless to argue that I knew nothing of the subject, for I had heard nothing else since Wilson had been mentioned for the nomination. Earthquake, fire, graft prosecution, the future of San Francisco, all were forgotten. Politics raged like a fire in a redwood forest lit by a cigarette.

It was difficult to stand up against Mr. Phelan. He was no dynamo; on the contrary he was always calm, suave, diplomatic, but he could talk the hind legs off a donkey; and when he applied himself to win a point he won it.

Moreover, he had shown me so much hospitality and friendship – even to buying dozens of my books as they came out and inflicting them on his friends – that my conscience began to hurt me and I finally consented – somewhat sulkily – to make one effort as a speaker. Of course I should fail ignominiously, and then he would let me alone.

As the time for that speech approached I fell into a state bordering on panic. It was all very well to fail and be permitted to retire to private life, but the details of that failure made no appeal to me. I had visions of bursting into tears on the platform, or dropping in a dead faint, at the best stammering and stuttering and making a fool of myself generally.

I suddenly conceived the idea of consulting a Christian Science practitioner. Christian Science interested me no more than any other dogma, but such members of the faith as I had met always seemed as calm and collected as if they had sliced the points off their nerves. Perhaps I could learn their secret.

An elderly practitioner was recommended to me. I called on him and stated my case. He told me I must take a course of 'treatments'; which consisted in his offering up silent prayer while I read Mrs. Eddy.

I read exactly two pages of *Science and Health*, and watched him speculatively the rest of the time. He may have been praying, but it looked more to me as if he were resting his eyes, badly in need of glasses, to relieve an obvious eye strain. I privately suspected that he wore spectacles in the seclusion of home.

I was thoroughly impatient by the end of the second treatment. 'We are not getting anywhere,' I said. 'I can't read Mrs. Eddy, for I don't like her style, and if you are praying for me it does no good. I am terrified of that ordeal as ever. And it is but three days away!'

He was no doubt a sincere and ardent 'Scientist,' but he had had too long and exhaustive an experience not to recognize a possible convert when he met one, and he concluded with a sigh that I was hopeless. But he was a nice old gentleman, and very wise; he gave me a surprisingly sound piece of advice.

'When you stand up on that platform, say to yourself:

“I am nothing, the Cause is everything. All causes are greater than the individual. I won’t, *won’t* be frightened. I’ll not think of myself for a second.” ’

I have always felt grateful to that man, for he taught me the value of deliberate suggestion, and I have often practised it since. I recalled that in *Rulers of Kings* I had made the hero, with immense concentration, pray out of himself a passion for an unresponsive female, and concluded that the principle was the same.

## I X

THE meeting was to be held in the Rose Room of the Palace Hotel, and when the hour arrived, although I had worked myself up to the sticking point, I had a slight recurrence of panic and hid in a room across the hall. Mr. Phelan soon discovered me, however, and marched me into the Rose Room and on to the platform. Two or three others were to speak first and I had time to recover myself as my eyes roved over a large audience composed mainly of women. They all looked friendly, and I detected no satiric glances directed at my helpless self. I had also the satisfaction – than which there is nothing better for morale – of knowing that I was the best-dressed woman on the platform. I wore my newest Bergdorf-Goodman tailored suit and a small Paris hat.

Whether it was the clothes, or the suggestion I deluged my brain with as my time approached – ‘I am nothing: the Cause is everything’ – or the encouraging applause as I came to the front of the rostrum, certain it is that I felt no fear whatever and spoke my little piece without a halt. Of course I had been well primed by Mr. Phelan, and got off his ideas, principles, and sentiments with a fluency that must have made a strong appeal to his Irish humour. I dared not look at him, for I knew his eyes were twinkling.



One part of my duty was to attack Roosevelt, and, inspired to interpolate something of my own, I remarked that he was the hundred-per-cent male – one had only to look at that cave-man face – and it was no wonder that he had had no sympathy for women in their struggle for the franchise. (Immense laughter and applause!) For some reason this captured the fancy of the Press and it was widely quoted with caricatures of Roosevelt showing all his teeth. Privately I admired Roosevelt more than Wilson, but was bent upon being thorough.

The 'speech' was a grand success. Those women – all of them Democrats; there was no one for me to convert – were delighted to have a new recruit and even cheered me. My half-brother, William Palmer Horn, told me that he slipped in while I was in full flight and was so convulsed at my 'funny little gestures' that he was asked to leave by an indignant lady who sat next to him. 'If you do not respect Mrs. Atherton, please remember that we do,' she exclaimed at him, and he retired precipitately.

But although I had acquitted myself with some credit and had lost for all time any fear of speaking in public, I hated it as much as ever, and hoped that Mr. Phelan would be satisfied and worry me no more. I might have known better. Several other meetings were scheduled for the near future and he was determined that I should speak at all of them. Then I made up my mind to be so flippant that he would be disgusted and conclude that I would do the Democratic party more harm than good. I had discovered that I had the power to provoke laughter, and upon the following occasions I said every nonsensical thing that came into my head. When the Roosevelt women asked me searching questions I dismissed them with a wave of my hand and an airy: 'Oh, that doesn't matter. Nothing matters really, you know' – to their indignant amazement and the delighted laughter of the Wilsonites.

But, alas, I was so bad that everybody thought I was original! Nobody like me had ever been heard on a political platform before!

There was an occasional disapproving note, however.

One night, at a large public dinner, when I had been even more nonsensical than usual, Downey Harvey marched me into a corner. 'Look here!' he said. 'You've got to stop being funny and talk sense. We Democrats have been out of office too long and we want to get in. You can help us, but you'll make us ridiculous if you keep this up. Be funny occasionally, of course – a laugh now and then is worth a million dollars – but be serious meanwhile. You don't know a thing about the history and principles of the Democratic party. I am going to send you a book to-morrow, and I want you to promise me right here that you will read every word of it.'

'But I don't want to go on speaking,' I protested. 'That is the reason. . . .'

'You've got to go on,' he replied grimly. 'Make no mistake about that.'

I have a faint suspicion that Mr. Phelan too was growing alarmed and it had been agreed between them that Mr. Harvey should take me to task; Mr. Phelan never liked to be severe with women himself.

A few days later I was further admonished. I was lunching alone in a restaurant when Charles Wheeler, an eminent, lawyer and hopeful Democrat, joined me.

'I want to give you a piece of advice,' he said. 'You are in this thing now, in it up to the neck. Phelan has buffaloeed you on to the stump, and there you'll stay until the campaign is over. This is the advice: take your subject seriously but don't take yourself seriously. I know that sounds funny to you' – I had laughed aloud – 'but the tendency of all speakers as time goes on is to exaggerate their success and take themselves so seriously that they bore their public and lose it.'

I promised him warmly that I would not yield to temptation.

Mr. Harvey sent me that book full of condensed Democratic wisdom, and as I had concluded it would be as well to know what I was talking about hereafter – there being no escape! – I read it several times, and felt secure against inconvenient questions.

Well, I made twenty-seven speeches up and down the State of California. In towns large and small, villages, hamlets; once or twice speaking three times a day. My personal gain was fifteen pounds, which I had some difficulty getting rid of.

In several instances I was used as a decoy duck to draw the crowd for some politician anxious to be elected to office. I ceased to wonder that voters were glad to be addressed by a woman for a change. These men rarely indulged in anything but ancient platitudes and exposition of their own virtues. One man would declaim periodically, in a deep lugubrious voice and waving his arms in Delsartian arcs, 'I – love – my – country!' An English audience would have cried 'Hear! Hear!' and I came near to crying it myself.

In some of these towns, where conventions appeared to be negligible, I was disconcerted at first by women leaving after a few moments and farmers stomping out. I determined to put a stop to that and began every speech in this wise: 'It would seem that a certain percentage of these audiences only come to see what I look like. Therefore, I'll stand here for two minutes in silence so that you may gratify your curiosity by taking in every detail. Then I'd be obliged if you would leave at once. I am only an amateur and it upsets me when persons get up and walk out when I am trying to speak.'

No one dared move after that.

All these meetings, with one or two exceptions, were arranged by the local club women, and it must be said that

despite their brief experience in politics they carried everything off with remarkable smoothness. They even met me at the train and escorted me to the hotel where the best room available had been reserved for me. Very often that was saying little! I recall that in one instance the floor of my room looked as if it had not been swept since the hotel was built, and I dressed and undressed standing on the bed. Sometimes the food was so bad that I filled up with black coffee. But Belle Strong, Robert Louis Stevenson's step-daughter, who had also been pressed into service, joined me for a time, and we could condole with each other.

As all Americans know, the Republican State of California was carried by the Phelan cohorts and was an important factor in the election of Woodrow Wilson. He was properly appreciative, and I among others received a charming note from him. Of course someone stole it.

## X

SOMETIME during that period I had conceived the idea of laying the scene of a novel in one of the little exploited North-Western States. Both New York and California were overworked, and I had written enough about Europe for the present. I longed for a new field, and I had never lost my craving for mental adventure.

After asking a good many questions about the various North-Western States I decided upon Montana, whose copper mines and spectacular personalities had made it, for a time, almost as famous as California. I paid Butte a brief visit, read the local history, gathered data and impressions, and then went to Genoa to begin the book. Muriel intended to spend a year in Europe with her small family, and I was to meet her there a month later and establish her in Switzerland.

Genoa was the most progressive business city in Italy and reputed to be the wealthiest. It is a beautiful city on its hills and lively port and not unlike San Francisco from Twin Peaks. I stayed at the Bristol Hotel, and as the restaurant was merely a little Ritz, I made a practice of lunching at the more characteristic Italian restaurants to see something of native life.

The 'Bourse' had an interest all its own. The leading business men of Genoa lunched there, and it was amusing to contrast them with the hurried, worried American when bolting his midday meal. These prosperous Genoese never looked hurried nor worried and sat for two hours eating and chatting in the large sunny upstairs room as if they had not a care in the world. I heard a story that I could well believe. An American came over to Genoa to transact some business connected with his own firm, and was shown so much hospitality by one of his new friends who intended to visit the United States shortly after that he made him promise to go direct to his office from the dock when he landed in New York. The man did so. On the office door was a notice: 'Out for lunch. Back in five minutes.' The Genoese fled in horror, and although the two men met frequently, he declined firmly every invitation to lunch.

All business in Genoa ceased before five o'clock, and then the fashionable world promenaded under the arcades of the Via Venti Settembre. The crowds were so dense and the spirit that animated them so leisurely that the snail's pace grew rather boring to an American. The men, being Italians, were out for the casual flirtation, and one method of making themselves agreeable to a woman who attracted their roving fancy was to give her a sudden pinch on any part of her anatomy that happened to be handy. But otherwise they were quite well behaved. Receiving no encouragement, they sauntered on still hopeful.

I wrote six chapters of my book, and then, as I found it

was becoming involved in mining matters, of which I knew less than nothing, I realized I should have to return to Montana and write it there. But meanwhile I had to await Muriel's arrival.

I had a harrowing experience during that brief sojourn in Southern Europe that made me for ever more wary of judging by appearances, for I barely escaped a scandal.

Living in the Bristol was the American Consul-General, Mr. Smith, and a day or two after my arrival he introduced himself and proved to be a pleasant acquaintance. He had one of those large open American faces that one instinctively trusts but are wholly without charm. Not the man for whom any woman would run the risk of a social debacle!

He had lived in Genoa for several years and had an interesting circle of friends; most of the women were English, married to Italians. He brought them to call on me and they made the month pass very quickly. The only one of them I remember by name was the Marchesa Donghi – curiously enough a niece of the Englishman whose inconvenient questions had driven me to write *Senator North*; her husband had lived grandly on his capital and then died leaving her not a lira. However, she had a tiny income of her own and always seemed happy. I saw a good deal of her and she took me through several private palaces, which were useful later when I transferred the scene of the book for a time to Genoa.

## X I

I WAS very anxious to visit Monte Carlo, which I had never seen, and Mr. Smith arranged a party including three of my new friends. We were to go by boat and return by train three days later.

Mr. Smith was obliged to go to Milan for several days and returned only the night before, sending me up a note to meet him in the lobby at eight o'clock next morning.

While we were in the car on our way to the port he informed me casually that none of the others could go! One's little boy had developed a temperature; another had decided overnight to go to Rome with her husband; the marchesa was afraid of being ill, as the sea was very rough.

I was rather taken aback, but as Mr. Smith seemed unperturbed I concluded not to be silly, and accepted the situation. Smith was curiously unworldly for a man of his experience, but doubtless he had played squire to so many American women that it was all one to him whether they ran singly or in couples. And a less predatory mortal never lived.

The sea was so rough that the journey lasted for five hours, during which Mr. Smith looked unhappy but slept most of the time. It was impossible to put in at Monaco and we were obliged to go on to Nice. There would be no train to Monte Carlo for several hours and as there were no motors at the dock Mr. Smith engaged an open fiacre to carry us over the intervening miles. In this, with our luggage piled in front of us, we drove past the long line of Nice Hotels, in one or more of which I happened to know that Californians of my acquaintance were staying. I could imagine the letters that would fly back to San Francisco if we were seen. I could only hope for the best.

Mr. Smith had engaged rooms at the small hotel in Monte Carlo that he always patronized. It was late in the season and we had the hotel to ourselves! The woman who kept it, an affable soul, escorted us up to two large front rooms and smilingly indicated to me the connecting door. I ostentatiously locked it (not that I was afraid of Smith!), hung my coat on one of its pegs, and placed my bags on a chair in front of it. I doubt if she was impressed.

Of course no one frequented the vulgar Casino who possessed the entrée to the International Sporting Club. After luncheon Mr. Smith went out to get my card of admission. but returned in some perturbation. "They won't give you a

card unless you have two sponsors,' he said, 'and I don't know anyone here of sufficient importance. What a pity the marchesa couldn't come. Suppose you come along with me and see if you can talk them over.'

The ordeal proved simpler than we had expected. The man at the bureau, after shrugging once or twice and saying he was 'sorry - but,' suddenly was inspired to ask me if I belonged to a fashionable club. I was able to inform him that I was a member of the Ladies' Athenæum in London, and he was trusting enough to take my word for it - I could have offered no proof - and gave me a card.

There could be no greater contrast than between the garish Casino and the chastely decorated Sporting Club. The halls were hung with pale grey satin, and, to quote from *Perch of the Devil* (first impressions are often the best): 'all the colour was in the company. The long tables were crowded with smart-looking men and women, although only the ladies that had stepped out of ancestral halls dared to show a grey hair or a wrinkle. The cocottes were so young and so fresh as well as beautiful that to Ora and Ida they looked much like girls of their own class. All, old and young, were splendidly dressed and bejewelled, and if there was excitement in their brains there was no evidence of it in their calm or animated faces. They might have been a great house party amusing themselves with some new and innocuous game . . . A number of the most notable men in Europe were present, princes of reigning houses, statesmen high in the service of their country . . . The cool splendour of the rooms, the atmosphere of high breeding and restraint, the gratification of the æsthetic sense at every turn, the beauty of the women and the distinguished appearance of the men made it a romantic and memorable scene. Notwithstanding the constant clink of gold, the monotonous admonitions of the croupiers, it was a sort of worldly fairyland, this apotheosis of one of the most perilous of human indulgences . . . For the hour, and the



hour generally lasted until four in the morning, they lived in a world apart, and a duchess sat next to a cocotte with a serene indifference that amounted almost to democracy.'

On the night of my first visit the Duc d'Abruzzi was present. His picture had appeared many times in the American newspapers, for he was not only a notable explorer but had been reported engaged to a daughter of Senator Elkins, and we had all received the impression that he was a tall dark and uncommonly handsome man. To my surprise and disappointment he was short, plump, drab in colouring, with a young-old face that looked thoroughly disillusioned. He was accompanied by a lady, a handsome Russian blonde – and her mother.

Many other notabilities were there, men and women of title from all over Europe, famous beauties like Cléo de Merode with her Madonna coiffure, and Jewish bankers who played for stupefying stakes.

Mr. Smith's only real recreation was Monte Carlo, and he was soon absorbed, while I sat beside him as he made his rather modest ventures. I made one or two myself, as a visit to Monte Carlo would be incomplete without a gamble, but was more interested in watching the company.

The next day Mr. Smith took me to Ciro's for luncheon, but I had the greater part of the day to myself, and, after a brief visit to the Casino, wandered about that beautiful town. As it happened I met no one I knew.

We visited the Sporting Club again that night, and when we returned to the hotel at two o'clock, Mr. Smith left me as he had done the morning before to go on to another place where he would find further amusement.

## X I I

I WAS sitting at luncheon in the hotel dining-room when I saw him again. He came in from the street looking rather

ghastly and almost unkempt. He sank into a chair, dropped his head on his hand and groaned.

'I only got back this minute,' he muttered, 'and I never felt so awful in my life. I've had a strange experience. My champagne must have been doped at that place, for I woke up not an hour ago in a private room. It must have been done as a queer kind of joke, for I was not robbed. There was a girl . . .' He branched off hastily. 'I never had such an experience before in all the years I have been coming to Monte Carlo. It was no dive but a place where everyone goes for some late drinking and to have a good time generally. Oh, God! My head!'

I was properly sympathetic and told him he had better go to bed; I could take care of myself. He retired apologetically, assuring me he would be all right by dinner time.

Once more I wandered about, this time rather bored. When I re-entered the hotel late in the afternoon the chambermaid met me at the head of the stairs and asked me to go to Mr. 'Smcet's' door; he wished to speak to me.

A hollow voice answered my knock. I opened the door. Smith, clad in bright pink pyjamas that made his always sallow skin look pea-green, was propped up in bed. He regarded me with haggard appealing eyes. His hands were twitching.

'I'm in a terrible state of nerves,' he groaned. 'I feel as if they were trying to fly through my skin. Did I hear you say you had some medinal? If I could only sleep!'

I fetched the medinal hastily. He swallowed two pellets, and once more apologized: 'I can't go to the Sporting Club to-night. I don't think I could stand on my feet. But there is no reason why you shouldn't go alone. In an exclusive club like that no one would think anything of it.'

I assured him that I had had enough of the Sporting Club, and went out and bought a Tauchnitz to read during the evening.

It was about an hour after my solitary dinner in the other-

wise deserted restaurant that there was a faint tap on my door. For a second after I opened it I saw no one, then caught a glimpse of something pink out of a corner of my eye. Smith was standing flat against the wall, both arms outstretched as if bracing himself. 'Have you any more medinal?' he gasped. 'I'll go crazy if I don't sleep. My nerves are shrieking.'

I gave him three more pellets – all I had, and asked him if it wouldn't be wise to call in a doctor. But he shook his head and crept back to his room.

I returned to my Tauchnitz, but after I had read one page three times I became aware that panic was invading me. Imagination rioted. Suppose Smith had been poisoned by some vengeful female or her lover and died on my hands? Then what? The hotel would be swarming with police. I should be hauled before a magistrate and interrogated. The *Paris Herald* would revel in the sensation, and so would every newspaper in the United States.

What could I say? That only by accident did I happen to be alone in Monte Carlo with the American Consul-General to Italy? Who would believe it – or want to believe it? The facts spoke for themselves. I *had* gone there alone with him. We were the only guests in the hotel. Our rooms adjoined. I had gone about with him in public. The maid could bear witness that I had taken medicine to his room.

Lucky if I were not accused of poisoning him.

And Smith! Good lord!

I paced the room anathematizing myself. I was a woman of the world and should have known better. I could at least have gone to another hotel. No one was to blame but myself – a reflection that never yet consoled anyone.

In those desperate moments I even wished that I looked my age, but I looked twenty years younger, and as I had worn lovely gowns to the Sporting Club I had attracted a certain amount of attention. Vanity was moribund.

I am afraid I gave poor Smith's possible demise not a thought save as related to my own dilemma. Once or twice I listened at the fatal connecting door. Not a sound. He was either asleep or dead.

To flee would be stupid. I had nowhere to go. Even if I found a late train for Genoa and the man died I should certainly be arrested. More and worse scandal. There was nothing to do but stick it out. Finally I went to bed, expecting to lie awake in torment, but fell asleep before long.

When I woke it was eight o'clock. I rang for the maid and told her to knock at Mr. Smith's door and ask him how he felt. I held my breath until she returned. Then I drew the longest breath of my life. Mr. 'Smect' was feeling better, and would I be ready to take the ten o'clock train for Genoa?

He slept all the way, with his mouth open.

### X I I I .

To quote again: 'Butte, "the richest hill in the world" (known at a period less famous for metals and morals as "Perch of the Devil"), is a long scraggy ridge of granite and red and grey earth rising abruptly out of a stony uneven plain high in the Rocky Mountains. The city is scooped out of its southern slope and overflows upon The Flat. On all sides the sterile valley heaves away as if suddenly arrested in the throes of the monster convulsion that begat it; but pressing close, cutting the thin brilliant air with its icy peaks, is an irregular and nearly circular chain of mountains, unbroken white in winter, white on the blue enamelled slopes in summer . . . It is only when the warm Chinook wind roars in from the West and melts the snow much as lightning strikes, that you realize the appalling surface barrenness if this region devastated by the sulphur and arsenic fumes of ores roasted in the open or belching from the smelters. They

ate up the vegetation, and the melting snows and heavy June rains washed the weakened earth from the bones of valley and mountain, leaving both as stark as when the earth ceased to rock and began to cool. Since the smelters have gone to Anaconda, patches of a sad and timid green have appeared between the sickly grey boulders of the foothills, and, in Butte, lawns as large as a tablecloth have been cultivated. Anaconda Hill, at the precipitous eastern end of the city with its tangled mass of smokestacks, gallows-frames, shabby grey buildings, trestles, looks like a gigantic shipwreck, but is merely the portal to the precious ore bodies of the mines, whose shafts, levels, and cross-cuts to the depth of three thousand feet, pierce and ramify under city and valley . . . The town improves as it leaps westward . . . the houses of the residence section grow more and more imposing . . . on the high western rim of the city stands the red School of Mines. It had a permanent expression of surprise, natural to a bit of Italian Renaissance looking down upon Butte.'

I spent a month in that noisy, bustling, swarming, ugly but highly interesting city. It seemed to me that the inhabitants never went to bed, or if they did they got up again immediately. There were groups under my windows all night, talking and arguing. Trucks, laden with ore, shook the hotel as they clattered by on the cobbled streets. I thought longingly of the profound silences that must pervade the mine three thousand feet below my bed.

Nevertheless, as the scene of my book was to be laid largely in Butte, there I must remain for a time, and although it was impossible to write there was much to learn.

Socially it was rather interesting, although its glory had departed with the flight of its millionaires to spend their gains (ill-gotten or otherwise) in New York and Europe. I had brought no letters, but 'everybody' called on me. Whether they called out of hospitality or mere curiosity was

nothing to me, for I had always wanted to learn at first hand what small-town society was like. I doubt if Butte was typical, for its history had been too hectic, its conditions too unique, the wealth of certain of its inhabitants too sudden and enormous; the most that could be said was that if it had never attained to the dignity of a great city, still it was conceded to have more personality than any town of its size in the United States.

Those that were left of the 'leading families' were by no means impoverished. Servants must have been their major problem if I could judge by personal experience. When I returned the calls I was left waiting on the doormat while the slatternly maid, having closed the door in my face, strolled off to ascertain if the lady of the mansion was 'in.' Nevertheless, the few women of consequence remaining in Butte were very much of 'the world.' They had travelled extensively, visited in New York and bought their clothes there. The appointments of their houses were quite perfect, and if the cooks were bad, the food on their hospitable tables was abundant and the best the market afforded.

I was taken down into one of the great mines. We descended rapidly in a cage (this gave me a very queer feeling in my legs) until we were half a mile below the surface. There the atmosphere was so exhausted, the heat so oppressive, that I wondered how the miners could endure it, even though there were three shifts a day. Everywhere were signs: *SAVE YOURSELF*, which added nothing to one's mental comfort. The props were always threatening to snap under the tremendous pressure, and sometimes did. Inspection was unrelenting, but accidents happened all the same. The vast mine, ramifying in all directions and farther than the eye could follow, was lighted by electricity and one heard the constant pulsing of the dynamo. Miners were at work everywhere, and trolley-cars laden with ore sped up and down in passages so narrow we were obliged to flatten ourselves

against the wall. In a large and luxurious office an official sat telephoning to New York! It was all very interesting and I would not have missed it, but never before nor since have I been so glad to see the light of day.

That singular character, Mary MacLane, called on me. She was almost forgotten now but a few years before she had been the most talked-of young author in the country. While still under twenty she had written a book impeccable in style, startlingly audacious, and containing something very close to a real philosophy of life. As her parents had not been endowed with the genius to capture any of the State's infinite riches, she was ignored, despite her striking personality, by those who had, until *The Story of Mary MacLane* excited both Press and public, and then they hardly knew whether to be gratified with the new notoriety that had descended upon Montana or not. When she returned to Butte, however, after a long period of lionizing in the East, Society not wishing to be behind the times, concluded to take her up. Someone gave her an evening party to which all the elect were invited. They surrounded her, flattered her, quoted from her book. She sat in silence, smoking, her large brilliant eyes roving sardonically from one face to another. Finally she arose, tossed her cigarette stub on to the Aubusson carpet and remarked: 'Do you know what you all remind me of, you fat rich women? A lot of hogs with your feet in a trough.' And sauntered out. It was probably a moment of exquisite revenge for Mary MacLane.

When she called on me she remained for several hours, talking all the time, and with exceeding brilliance. She was very nervous, pacing the room for the most part, for she led a wild life down on 'The Flat,' that resort of all the wild spirits in Butte. She told me in a mixture of slang and prose of an almost classical purity of a fight she had had in a saloon with a 'sporting woman' and of the fine black eye she had given her. She admitted freely that she 'drank,'

and liked rowdiness when she happened to be in the humour. And yet she read constantly, the best that was written, had been well drilled in the classics from childhood. Her criticisms of current authors were acute, unbiased, and everything she said was worth listening to.

A strange and rather tragic figure. The secret of her reckless deterioration, I fancy, was her lack of creative talent. She could only write of herself. She had the genius of personality, but none for the fiction she would have written so brilliantly had nature been kinder and given her more than that tiny spark. As it was she took refuge in 'life' as it appealed to a naturally decadent mind. When Butte palled she went to New York for a 'flyer', although its centres of culture had forgotten her. Not that that worried her; she preferred the gambling houses on Forty-second Street, and certain congenial spirits as outcast as herself. Whenever I mentioned her name to any of my acquaintances in Butte there was an oppressive silence. Words had long since failed them.

#### X I V

I WENT to Helena to write the book – a beautiful little mountain city high in the Rockies. Although its population was only twelve thousand it was said at one time to have more wealth per capita than any city in the United States, and still bore evidence of its former importance in a Catholic cathedral, second only to that of New York in size, handsome houses surrounded by lawns scattered over its uneven and picturesque surface, and you learned immediately upon arrival that thirty million dollars had been taken out of its main street. It was by no means dead now, although its placer mines were exhausted; it had the finest hotel in Montana, good shops and several banks. 'Society,' I had been told in Butte, consisted of the twelve women who could afford to lose the most money at bridge.



Society was something I was determined to avoid in Helena; I had had enough of that in Butte, and had found in it remarkably little difference from Society anywhere. This was to be my first novel of the great American Middle Class.

I was delighted with the beauty, the quiet, the sparkling atmosphere of Helena – even though I never drew a long breath during the months I spent there – and as the Placer Hotel was always swarming with commercial travellers and ‘conventions,’ I established myself in one less popular on a hill some distance from the centre of the town.

I had brought no letters, and, my Butte friends informed me when I informed them, no one in Helena would call on me unless I were properly introduced. The *twelve* were haughty and exclusive and ‘ran after’ no one. Nothing could be more satisfactory.

But although one letter anywhere gives one the entrée to fashionable Society, it occurred to me after I had arranged my belongings and taken several walks about the city, that regarding my immediate need I was in a dilemma. The Middle Class. How was I to obtain the entrée to that? I did not even know the name of one of its members, and, even if I had, it would hardly have been possible to walk in upon her and announce that I had come to Helena to study the genus. No doubt they were haughtier than the ladies who could afford to lose a hundred dollars at bridge.

Then I remembered that when on the train from San Francisco to Montana for my first visit to Butte I had struck up an acquaintance with two young women who lived in Helena. I was sitting out in the car while my compartment was being done up for the night when my attention was attracted by the picturesque conversation, rich in slang, of two girls across the aisle. I finally asked if I might sit with them; I was ‘travelling alone and bored with myself.’ They looked at me rather suspiciously, but thawed after a time, and I was

informed that one was a milliner in Helena, the other a beauty specialist. 'And you bet there's a good living in that,' said the latter. 'Helena's six thousand feet up and the air's that dry it turns the hair grey and withers up the skin in less'n no time unless they take care of both and never let up. I don't hold with hoistin' and skinnin', but creams and massage - they're the lay. And nobody knows more about 'em than I do. Took a course in Chi. I make a grand livin' out of all the heads and faces in Helena that've got the price. I've got all the rich ones runnin' to my Parlour and some not so rich. Women'll make any sacrifice when it comes to complexion and hair.'

I talked with them until growls from adjoining sections and hints from the porter sent us all to bed. When we parted the beauty specialist invited me to call on her if I ever came to Helena and have a 'complimentary facial.'

Here might be the entering wedge. Fortunately I remembered her name. I called on her, and although she was warmly cordial I was relieved to find that she had forgotten her offer of a treatment free of charge. As I had no other excuse for calling upon her, however, I was forced to submit to a 'facial,' despite the fact I have always been convinced that massage does the skin more harm than good.

But I was rewarded, for she talked incessantly, and I must have heard all the gossip of Helena during the two hours I spent under her hands; she also shampooed and manicured me. I learned that all the scandals were about débutantes and high-schoolgirls; with married men, for the most part. The married women settled down and behaved themselves. The schoolgirls 'plaster themselves with paint, the little fools, although they're probably held under the spout when they get home.' But the ladies did not. They didn't even dye their hair, they were 'that respectable.' But they were always dressed in the height of the fashion, and 'every stitch they wore came from New York.' And al-

though they were 'terrible exclusive,' and the *twelve* only visited among themselves, when they wanted to give a 'real blow-out,' of course they had to invite many who 'played bridge for low stakes.

All this was very enlightening, but not what I was after. I did not dare mention the term 'middle class' to this independent little American, who, despite her respect for the ladies that so liberally contributed to her income and 'behaved themselves,' was entirely devoid of class-consciousness and no doubt would have demanded angrily what I meant. 'I guess people that haven't got enough money to go in high Society are just as good as them that does,' I could hear her exclaim. 'Middle class indeed! Let their husbands strike it rich and they'd be on top in no time. That's all that "class" amounts to, out here in the West, anyhow.'

I should have agreed with her, but that was not the point. Nor was she of the tribe I was hunting. I wanted to know women who possibly did their own work but had a certain amount of education and refinement. Middle class, as I understood it – in the United States; conditions were quite different in Europe – was a large body that was in a state of flux; while moderately prosperous its component parts were forced to live simply; to-morrow they might be buying Rolls-Royces and building palaces in New York, such being the excellent digestive apparatus of the U.S.A. I had met them in their final glory all over the world; what I wanted now was to see what they were like in their intermediate stage.

## X V

ALL of us in one form or another have our luck. Mine has never failed me where necessary data for a story are concerned. A day or two later my problem was unexpectedly solved. The woman who kept the hotel waylaid me as I was

going out and informed me that one of her guests, Mrs. Edwards, was anxious to meet me; she had 'read all my books.'<sup>4</sup> Would I mind if she called? Of course I replied that I should be glad to see her and she called that afternoon.

Mrs. Edwards proved to be a charming person, small and lively and red-haired. She had studied medicine in New York at Columbia University, but, during a visit to Helena, had married Mr. Edwards, a prominent politician, who derived his income from a crockery store. That income was moderate, in a small place like Helena, and although she was acquainted with the exclusive aristocracy she was not invited to play bridge. That, however, was a merry jest, and she was quite contented and happy. I don't think she even indulged in dreams of being rich; she was well fed, well clothed, and had a devoted and intelligent husband. I should venture to say that the *twelve* had nothing on her in breeding and possibly in birth. As for her husband he was a descendant of Jonathan Edwards and proud of the fact.

Through her I met her friends, Mr. and Mrs. Wilton Brown. He was a geological engineer, and she meditated opening a 'souvenir shoppe', as there was only intermittent work in these days for men of his profession. She had been a school teacher, and soundly educated in the public schools; he was equally accomplished in his own line.

The Browns had a pretty little house, simply but tastefully furnished. The Edwards took a cottage shortly after I met them. Both ladies 'did their own work,' and, apparently, with the minimum of effort. At least they had abundant leisure, plenty of time to read, and they were as conversant with the literature of the day as I was. Neither had any children or their problems might have been less simple.

They bought a few of the books they read but borrowed the greater number from the Public Library. I had a talk with the librarian one day, and she told me that for some ten

or fifteen men and women in Helena she had to buy the finest that was published in memoirs, history, and fiction. The majority read trash, but the exceptions would have none of it, and she did her best despite the strain on her budget. She informed me that if I visited every small town in the United States their librarians would tell me the same thing. It was for this reason I resented *Main Street* when it came out, for it gave no hint of these intelligent groups, any more than it did of those church groups that, as a rule, are social nuclei in small towns. These little communities are astonishingly diversified. In Helena there was a small group of 'decadents,' as they were politely called: men – clerks for the most part – who betrayed themselves by their thin voices and that switch of the coat-tails that so aptly expresses their sense of superiority. They too were patrons of the best the library afforded. But if Mr. Lewis had portrayed the small town in all its phases, instead of confining himself to its vulgarians and semi-morons, producing the impression there was no one else to write about, his book might not have attained the world-wide success it did; it was the indignation of the small town, loudly expressed, that sent the public tumbling over itself to read *Main Street*.

Mrs. Edwards and Mrs. Brown showed me the utmost hospitality. I was in and out of their houses every afternoon, sat with them in their kitchens while they cooked, gossiped, discussed the affairs and books of the day with them. I did not put either in *Perch of the Devil*, but through them I got my impressions. Mr. Brown gave me lessons in ores, and told me what books to get from the library, well supplied with mining literature. Mr. Edwards instructed me in the latent agricultural possibilities of the State, so dependent upon irrigation. The richest man out of Montana was named Clark. He had built himself the ugliest house in New York, and had not only deserted his native State but done next to nothing for it. He could have immortalized himself

by giving it a complete irrigating system. But rich men rarely know what they have missed until they are drifting about in the ether wondering what it was all about anyhow.

When *Perch of the Devil* was finished both Mr. Edwards and Mr. Brown read it in order to 'check up' any mistakes I may have made regarding ores or irrigation. I was not particularly interested in the latter problem, and referred to it as briefly as possible, but I fell in love with ores. They are as fascinating to study as a new language.

Mrs. Brown and Mrs. Edwards also read the manuscript, and I believe those four were the only persons in all Montana who did not hate *Perch of the Devil*. No State, I have observed, can stand the truth about itself; it is as resentful of stark realism as of the one-sidedness of *Main Street* - which was certainly truthful as far as it went. Like any individual whom you 'put in a book,' it wants unadulterated flattery. My publisher, Mr. Stokes, expected *Perch of the Devil* to make a 'big noise,' and possibly his hopes would have been realized if the Great War had been obliging enough to smoulder for a few months longer. It was published in August, 1914.

## XVI

I INTENDED to sail for Europe as soon as *Perch of the Devil* was 'out,' but remained in New York meanwhile to see it through the press. It was a long time before I saw Europe again!

My old friend Elizabeth Jordan was now a member of the reorganized House of Harper, and I had not been in New York a week before she approached me with a demand for a history of California in one volume. The great Panama-Pacific Exposition was to be held in San Francisco during the following year, and as all histories of the State were in large and bulky tomes, the Harpers were convinced

that the thousands visiting the Exposition would welcome a bird's-eye view of California in a volume of convenient size.

At first I refused; my plans were all made to go abroad. But Miss Jordan was as pertinacious as Mr. Phelan and Mrs. Fiske. Moreover, the idea really appealed to me; I had always intended to write a history of California, and, as State histories are rarely read by the inhabitants of any other, this, as the canny Miss Jordan pointed out, was my opportunity to obtain a nation-wide public. Alluring prospect. I consented – and missed the thrill of being in Europe when war was declared.

As I must be near a library for constant reference and as summer was approaching and the Public Library was in the hottest part of the city, and as I was offered the hospitality of the one at Columbia University, I established myself in the only thing resembling an hotel in the neighbourhood. It was anything but comfortable; the rooms were about six by eight and the food abominable; but this part of New York was practically a university town and all the students lived in small apartments or lodgings.

But there were compensations. One of my best friends, Charles Hanson Towne, 'the wittiest man in New York,' was spending the summer in the city and often came up to see me and take me out. That famous Asclepiadean of sophisticates and intelligentsias, Dr. Edmund Devol, was living on the Heights for a time. On the rare occasions when he was not dining out he took his evening meal at my 'hotel,' and soon became the family friend. Fortunate for me it was that I met him, for he carried me triumphantly through the worst illness of my life. Mrs. William Carpenter, wife of the Provost of Columbia University, called on me and I went frequently to her hospitable house. The President and Mrs. Nicholas Murray Butler entertained delightfully. Miss Florence Wilson, afterward Librarian of the League of Nations, was on the library staff of Columbia and introduced

me to Professor Grabau, who hunted out data for my geological chapter and read the manuscript later to make sure it was correct.

I was soon deeply interested. And, after all, my departure was merely postponed; the history was to touch only the high spots, and although there was an infinite number in that most romantic and varied of all States, I could easily finish it in three months. With the greater part of the chronicle of California I was as familiar as with my own family history, and I knew exactly what books in the library to consult in order to refresh my memory.

Alas, that I should have lost my one great opportunity to pose as a prophet.

I was on my way to Miss Jordan's one Sunday when I bought a copy of the *Evening Telegram* from a shouting newsboy. It contained an account of the assassination of the Austrian Crown Prince Franz Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo.

It was a sensational piece of news to carry in to a Sunday afternoon tea party, and caused a great deal of lively talk about fanatics and the dubious delights of being heir to a throne.

As I stood beside the table looking down at those flaring headlines I flittingly recalled all I had heard while living abroad of 'the war that would one day convulse Europe,' of 'the war-breeding germs in the Balkans.' It was on the tip of my tongue to say: 'This means war. The great European War.' But something held me back. Possibly the fear of derision if nothing happened. Very curious, that sudden access of timidity, for as a rule I say what I think and accept the consequences. Perhaps the real reason was that the country of which I had always heard Europeans express fear was Russia. Even in England (it was a long while since I had been in France, save for fleeting visits to Paris), when a possible European war was discussed, the menace was all



in the 'Russian bear.' 'That avalanche in the north-east ready to overwhelm Europe the moment its opportunity came.' Little they guessed that Russia resembled nothing so much as one of those false but imposing façades designed for a street scene on a Hollywood 'lot.' Never once did I hear fear of Germany expressed, despite her immense standing army. I could not connect Russia with Serbia at the moment and so lost a glorious chance to say 'I told you so!' It is a great triumph to make a lucky guess; which is all that successful prophecy amounts to.

A month later the conservative *Evening Post* came out with a Sunday edition. On its front page was one tremendous headline: WAR. After that there was no talk of anything else, and for me it was rather difficult to shut out the most interesting event that had happened in my lifetime and write about the California past for five or six hours a day. Fortunately the book was nearly finished.

I knew that Muriel was now in Belgium and telegraphed to Mr. Bryan, then Secretary of State, asking him to trace her movements and direct the American Consul General to look out for her. He was extremely kind and did trace her, but before he could advise me of her safety I learned that she was in England with Lloyd and Gertrude Lowndes, and had found someone to help her at every turn. Shortly after, she joined me in New York, and a few months later I took an apartment in 116th Street. I cared little for that part of the city, but my illness had intervened and Dr. Devol ordered me to live where the air was fresher than in the lower and more congested part of New York.

## BOOK VIII

### I

IN 1916 I went to Paris. Whitney Warren and Owen Johnson, those ardent 'friends of France,' begged me to go over and study the war work of the French women. The newspapers and magazines were full of the splendid work of the women of Great Britain, and they were anxious the world should know that the French were equally competent and devoted. Honoré Willsie, then editor of *The Delineator*, offered me a high price for a series of articles on the subject, and her future husband, William Morrow, partner of Mr. Stokes, said he would be glad to publish them in book form.

The idea appealed to me from every point of view, not the least being that it promised adventure.

It promised so well that I came near, to ending my career in the River Garonne.

The voyage was uneventful, although we were always on the look out for submarines, until we entered the river on our way to Bordeaux. I was standing at the rail, watching the German prisoners at work in the fields, when I happened to glance down at the water and saw a curious white rippling on the calm surface – not unlike a long and very determined snake – making straight for the ship. It was painfully suggestive of a projectile beneath, and I felt an unpleasant weakening in the legs as I grasped the railing with both hands. Then I heard a Frenchman who stood beside me mutter: '*Mon dieu, qu'est que c'est cela? Je n'aime pas cela!*' Nor did I! I expected every moment to hear a terrific report, after which, no doubt, the boat would leap high in the air, execute a double somersault and then plunge to the bottom. That wriggling white snake was coming closer every second.

But nothing happened. We left the snake behind us. The Frenchman walked off muttering and shaking his head. When I described what I had seen to two army officers on board they were non-committal, but an American General whom I met subsequently at the Bliss's in Paris, told me that it was undoubtedly a submarine bomb, but had been either defective or mis-aimed.

Charles Sweeney, a Californian by birth, one of the most adventurous characters we have ever turned out, was on that boat. He had been a cadet at West Point, but shortly before graduation had engaged in some escapade that necessitated his leaving in a less formal manner. His passion being war he had managed to engage in every one that had occurred since, and was at present a Major in the Foreign Legion. He was returning to France after a short leave of absence. Fortunate for me that he was there, and also Captain Verdier, a French-San Franciscan, for, when the passport officials came on board, they regarded me with suspicion. Why had I, an American woman, come to France in war time? To study the war work of the French women? Strange and unheard of reason. A thin disguise, no doubt, for some nefarious enterprise. Was I not a blonde? And were not all Germans blondes?

I think they would have arrested me then and there, if I had not sent for Major Sweeney and Captain Verdier. Both these gentlemen – clad in beautiful horizon-blue uniforms – came to my rescue and vouched for my bona fides. Nevertheless I was forced to go to the *mairie*, and was detained there until I had sworn away my immortal soul and missed the boat train.

I arrived in Paris at midnight. There were no porters, no cabs, barely a glimmer of light. *C'est la guerre* was the excuse for all lacks, as I was soon to learn. I should probably have stood on that dark platform until morning if a fellow-passenger had not offered me a lift in his car. I did not know

his name, I had not even seen him on the train, but any risk was preferable to hours alone in that deserted *gare*. He deposited me safely at the Crillon.

## I I

I WAS quickly launched upon my new enterprise. Whitney Warren was in Paris, ready to introduce me to those of his French friends who were engaged in war work, and during my three months' sojourn I must have visited every important *œuvre* in France run by French women. I have related their activities in *The Living Present*, and will only repeat here that they filled me with admiration, undiminished by the years.

One of Mr. Warren's friends was that scintillating feminist, Valentine Thompson, and she persuaded me to leave the Crillon and live at the École Hôtelière she was running in Passy, where girls of the *petite bourgeoisie*, who could no longer hope for *dots* – nor husbands! – were being taught scientific cooking and all phases of housekeeping. There, as the solitary boarder, I should have the entire staff to dance attendance on me; and the best of food, as the leading chefs of Paris came out at stated intervals to instruct the girls. It was an interesting experience, and I was comfortable enough except when the bath-room pipes burst and there were no plumbers available. When I complained, the housekeeper merely threw out her hands and exclaimed: '*Mais, madame, c'est la guerre!*' I grew heartily tired of that phrase.

Although I met charming and hospitable Frenchwomen by the score I soon discovered that it was wise to accept no invitations for dinner. All the native cabbies had been mobilized and their places taken by men of neutral countries, who knew little of Paris except its central part, and refused to go beyond the Étoile after dark. Paris, owing to the ever-

present fear of Zeppelins and airplanes, was like an underground city at night.

I lunched out every day, however, and invariably with someone who was running an *œuvre* or interested in war relief of any kind. Afterward, escorted by my hostess of the occasion, I visited her particular centre of interest, and must have walked miles and miles and miles through hospitals, *Éclaté* stations, *Dépôts des Isolées*, munition factories, canteens at the railway stations, doll factories (the French hoped to recover this lost industry from the Germans), *œuvres* for the benefit of widows, orphans, midinettes, lacemakers: women of all sorts and pursuits whom the War had thrown abruptly out of work.

I saw horrible sights, particularly in the hospitals, where, in common with my hostess of the day, I distributed cigarettes, soap, and postcards to the mutilated soldiers; but the prevailing impression I received and retained was of courage, grim or cheerful endurance, at times of exaltation. And certainly I never saw women of any class work harder nor more uncomplainingly than those French women.

No doubt I saw France at her best and most normal; for what can be more normal to France than a state of war? I had been in Paris many times, but it had always seemed to me that the French were obliterated by Americans; car after car rolling up to the hotels laden with clothes, somewhere inside of which were rich American women.

Now, one rarely saw an American. Tourists, and rich women on periodical visits to their dressmakers, came no more. The American women who either lived in Paris or spent a part of every year there: Edith Wharton, Mrs. Whitney Warren, Mrs. Tuck, Mrs. Bliss and Mrs. Ridgley Carter of the American Embassy, Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt, Mrs. Frederick Allen, Anne Morgan, Elizabeth Marbury, Elsie de Wolfe, Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney, Mrs. Duryea, Mrs. Carroll, to mention but a few, all were running notable

*œuvres*, but they were seldom seen in public, and as my purpose was to study the work of the French I saw little or nothing of them. I must say that the French, who would criticize with their dying breath, were rather unkind in their comments. 'All they are working for is decorations. *Réclame*,' I heard at intervals. I felt like telling them they were ungrateful little beasts. And what mattered the motive if these women coaxed hundreds of thousands of dollars out of their compatriots at home and spent them on war work as efficient as their own? But the famous French logic is often clouded by the crude passion of envy.

The four women of whom I saw the most during the earlier part of my stay were Madame Waddington, Madame Balli, Madame Goujon, and the Duchess d'Uzès. Madame Waddington, an American by birth, widow of a famous diplomatist, and whose memoirs had been so widely read in the United States, was seventy-five, but skipped about Paris on her various activities at a rate that sometimes took my breath away when I accompanied her. More than once I snatched her out of the path of an oncoming taxi as she plunged recklessly across the street. Nor did she waste any time on her toilette! Her placket was always open in the back, her hat on any way, and she had not bought a new frock since the beginning of the War. Her energy was extraordinary, and at a luncheon she was ever the gayest and most entertaining person present. It was as if the excitements of the War and its call upon all her loyalties to her adopted country had given her a second youth. I feared that she would collapse suddenly, but she did not; not even during that later time when, like so many in Paris, she was often cold and hungry. Her blind sister Henriette died of privations, but Madame Waddington survived the War and lived for a year or two longer. I have seldom regretted the passing of anyone more.

Madame Balli (Greek by birth but French by upbringing-

ing), with whom I went once or twice a week to her various *œuvres*, had been one of the reigning beauties of Paris, leading the gay and inconsequential life of a *dame du monde* until the outbreak of the War. No more striking example of latent and unsuspected abilities ever was. Almost overnight she turned into one of the most capable and strenuous women in France. Nevertheless, the atmosphere of her house in the Avenue Henri Martin was always very gay at lunch time, when the War was sometimes forgotten and gossip prevailed. But luncheon over, we were rushed off immediately to one of her *œuvres*, where we were all expected to work. Her principal helper was Mr. Holman-Black, an American living in Paris, who had been famous for his musical entertainments in his charming hotel, but was now as devoted in his service as any Frenchman.

Madame Goujon, the daughter of that famous intellectual, Joseph Reinach, had been widowed during the first weeks of the War and was living with her father. It was a sad household, for the eldest son was 'missing,' and Madame Goujon had been married but a short time when the War took her young husband. Work must have been a godsend to her, and she gave herself little time to brood. Naturally it was in behalf of women widowed like herself, and her associates were also young widows. It may have consoled them somewhat to know that with that band of white linen above their dark brows they looked like handsome young abbesses.

The Duchesse d'Uzès, despite the War still one of the best-dressed women in Paris, and always with an admirer at her heels, was also young and energetic – and very handsome. Her hotel in the Parc Monceau buzzed with her activities; she had rebelliously allied herself with the Third Division of the Red Cross, composed of 'all the others' – that is to say, of neither the *noblesse* nor the *haute bourgeoisie*. She had snapped her fingers at too many conventions before the War broke out, and it would hardly have been possible for

her to run in harness with the Comtesse d'Haussonville or Madame Carnot, Presidents of the First and Second Divisions.

But, like all Frenchwomen, she was conventional *au fond*, as I discovered to my amusement one day when she took me to Versailles to a charity concert. It was given on a lawn and we sat in one of the impromptu 'private boxes.' Three members of the exiled Belgian Cabinet were present, large, bearded, solemn, and very bourgeois-looking gentlemen. I believe the concert was for the benefit of Belgian refugees.

She left me during one of the pauses and went over to speak to the Belgians. She returned with all three in her train and I understood that I was to have the honour of presentation.

English and Continental women rise when they are introduced to men, but American women do not. Doubtless the duchesse knew this (at all events she had known me for some time!), for as she began one of those long and involved introductions peculiar to France, she bent over, caught the skin of my wrist and literally lifted me to my feet. I nearly laughed aloud, but managed to appear impressed as I exchanged a few stilted commonplaces with three dull gentlemen who looked far too important and solemn to talk at all, and must have wondered why they were expected to waste time on an American whose country refused to come to their aid.

### I I I

ONE day at Valentine Thompson's I met Pierre Loti. A strange and disillusionizing figure! I do not know what I had expected, possibly something exotic or romantic, both lively and melancholy. Hardly to have been rendered speechless with disappointment. A little man, very upright, very rigid, he looked like a toy soldier jerked this way and that by



springs. His drawn face was painted white and red, his lips rouged, his eyebrows darkened, his eyes had the vacant slithering look of the drug addict. He barely spoke; when he did his words shot out in the same mechanical fashion that governed his bodily movements. He was one of those celebrities that should be heard of but not seen. .

Despite my interest in all these *œuvres* I had made it distinctly understood by my new friends that it was for literary purposes only and that I had no intention of going on any of their committees nor of raising money for them in America. Of such things I knew nothing, but was glad to help them in my own way.

No remonstrance was made. They seemed to understand, rather excited at the idea of becoming personally known to the great American public.

But fate was against me.

One day I received a note from the Marquise de Talleyrand, a great friend of Madame Waddington, inviting me to her house on a certain afternoon. I assumed it was for tea, and accepted. Arriving rather late, I found quite a party assembled. The Comtesse d'Haussonville, known as 'the greatest lady in France,' and now doubly eminent as President of the First Division of the Red Cross, was seated in the middle of the room, her gouty foot on a stool, looking as if presiding at a conference. Surrounding her were a number of American residents, among them the Comtesse de Russey de Sales and Princess Poniatowski, who had been Elizabeth Sperry of California, three or four important old Frenchwomen with their red wigs on one side as usual, Madame Waddington, and a Roumanian princess.

My hostess was at the other end of the room, and as I saw at once this was no ordinary tea party, I took a chair near the door and next to Ethel Crocker, daughter of William Crocker of San Francisco and niece of Princess Poniatowski.

Madame d'Haussonville was talking with a kind of sad energy of the wounded men who were dying in the War-zone hospitals for want of proper food. The *petit régime* consisted of milk and eggs, and many were so constituted that they would rather die than partake of either. The Government with its enormous expenses was helpless, and something must be done at once or many valuable lives would be lost to France.

I leaned over and whispered to Miss Crocker: 'They are forming an *œuvre* and I am going to slip out.'

'You'd better not,' she replied humorously. 'I see Madame de Talleyrand's eye on you. They've marked you down. You are on their list.'

So I remained, very unwillingly, although I sympathized with those who died rather than sustain life on eggs and milk, both of which I hated myself.

Madame d'Haussonville was speaking again. 'We are waiting for Marquise d'Andigné and hoping she will not fail us. It is only a fortnight since her father's death and she is in great grief. She must be the president of our *œuvre*. With her experience and energy success would be assured.'

Madame d'Andigné entered presently, a handsome young woman dressed in deepest mourning, her face stamped with melancholy.

But after a few words with Madame d'Haussonville she took the meeting into her own hands. She would be president of this *œuvre* they had decided to create but she expected all of them to help her. And more particularly the Americans. It might be difficult to raise money either in France or the United States, for this *œuvre* – to be called *Le Bien-être des Blessés* – was nearly two years behind the other war-relief organizations, to which Americans of wealth had contributed so liberally. It was her idea that each American member should take a State and organize by correspondence a local committee there, which would raise the necessary funds.

She paused expectantly. Princess Poniatowski and some other woman immediately pounced upon California and New York. One or two other States were mentioned. I don't think any of those women were very enthusiastic or hopeful, but were animated by the prevailing sense of duty.

Then Madame d'Andigné turned to me. What they would ask of me, and they hoped I would be kind enough to help them, was publicity for their *œuvre*. Would I write an appeal for them that could be distributed in pamphlet form? This was easy, and I was glad to be let off so lightly, although I still resented being inveigled to this meeting and given no choice in the matter.

## I V

MADAME D'ANDIGNÉ (Madeline Goddard of Rhode Island) had been married for about eighteen years to a man thirty years older than herself, but young for his years. As both were wealthy it had been a love match, and they seemed to be as much in love as ever. Not so singular in the *noblesse* circles of France as those who derive their knowledge of that country from novels may imagine.

It is not without significance that the happiest marriages I have known have been, with rare exceptions, among the wealthy, and bear out the contention of the Russian Communists that the intimate relations of men and women to be successful must be free of economic pressure. In the phase of civilization now expiring, the vast number of divorces have been in the middle class, using that term in its economic not its 'family' sense. The unhappy rich have compensations and the poor too many other problems. But the immense body between find it difficult to keep sentiment and romance alive harassed as they are with petty economies, straining to keep up appearances, mean contrivances, worn-out nerves. Moreover, having few distractions, married couples see far

too much of each other. The Russians think they have solved the problem by using the 'home' for sleeping purposes only, living in common, the children taken care of in day-nurseries. It is a solution that makes no appeal to the individualistic and home-loving American and Briton, but a change of some kind is due'—no doubt of that. As all cannot be wealthy, but as every one wants to be happy, and the masses — which includes millions beyond proletariat circles — are thoroughly aroused to the injustice of the unequal distribution of wealth, as there is no question whatever that domestic happiness depends ultimately upon the size of the family budget, any one capable of thought must perceive that we are headed straight for a revolution of some sort. Whether it will be bloodless or devastating depends upon the elasticity of the constructive minds at present giving utterance to so many pessimistic reflections and tentative theories. In time they may stop talking and do something. Is the co-operative system the solution?

•

Madame d'Andigné had already been decorated for notable work at the front, and I soon ceased to wonder that Madame d'Haussonville had chosen her to lead this forlorn hope, for she not only possessed unbounded energy and executive ability, but her spirits were so gay, when she forgot her present grief, that failure in anything was unthinkable to her. She was prepared to give liberally herself, and had little doubt that her wealthy relatives and friends in America would respond to her appeals. We soon became great friends and I saw her almost daily, either at her apartment or office.

I wrote the article, but was dissatisfied with it, although I believe it was used. When I was informed, as I had fully expected to be, that it was hoped I would make appeals through the American press, I told Madame d'Andigné that I purposed to indulge in polite blackmail. I had tried in vain to get into the War zone; the Ministère de la Guerre had

refused even to permit me to accompany the Duchesse d'Uzès to her castle near Amiens which she had turned into a hospital for officers; I was a prominent American and if anything happened to me there would be unpleasant publicity and they would be blamed.

Here, however, was my chance. Was I not working for France? And how was I to write of the crying needs of the hospitals near the front unless I could state that I had visited them in person and knew what I was writing about? Who would be impressed by second-hand information? Not the American public.

Madame d'Andigné laughed and said it might be managed. The Marquis was attached in some capacity to the Government, and, as barriers of caste were temporarily levelled, was on friendly terms with the ruling bourgeois. In due course I was summoned to the War Office.

The French, for all we hear of their Latin excitability, their supernal cleverness, their lightning wit, are the slowest people on earth. They hem and haw and talk interminably. Time means nothing to them. The American soldiers vowed that the French fought on union hours, and that was the reason the War finished so soon after we entered it. The Germans, grown accustomed to their enemies' cessation of activities at a certain hour every afternoon, were unprepared for the continued onslaughts of the impatient recruits out of the West.

I must have gone to that Ministère de la Guerre twenty times, climbing several flights of stairs at that. The official to whom I had been turned over was an intelligent man who spoke English well and liked to air it. And he loved to talk! And he talked of everything but my wish to visit the hospitals in the War zone. While others awaiting his attention sat on hard benches in the room without, he would discourse upon the activities and progress of the Royalist Party before the outbreak of war consolidated all parties. He was a

merchant from Lyons, but a passionate Royalist. His argument was commendably simple. God was the head of the universe. The father was the head of the family. Was it not logical, therefore, that a King should rule the State? Finding that it was impossible to hurry him, I listened amiably, although I cared as little for his politics as whether he ate cereals or bacon and eggs for breakfast. When I prodded him – for even a Frenchman runs down occasionally – and remarked that I could not remain in France interminably, he would assure me that the machinery for my permission to enter the War zone had been set in motion, and the matter would be settled in due course.

Finally – on trial, I suppose; I have no idea what they thought I might do – I was given permission to go to Meaux, the nearest point in the War zone to Paris.

I might as well have stayed at home. Madame Camille Lyon, an important member of the *haute bourgeoisie* and high in favour with the Government, went with me. She was a clever and companionable woman and we spent a pleasant day in Meaux!

I presented myself in wrath at the War Office next morning and demanded to be told at once whether I was to be permitted to penetrate deeply into the War zone or not. If not, I'd return to New York by the next boat, and their hospitals could take care of themselves.

My Royalist friend was very soothing, and begged me to wait a few days longer. I did. There was nothing else to do. And I knew that the Marquis d'Andigné was pulling wires.

I expected to besiege the War Office every day for a week, at least, but on the third day I was told that the Ministry, after due deliberation (!) had concluded to permit me to go to Châlons-sur-Marne and Bar-le-Duc. Of course I had my passport, but they gave me a circular official letter of introduction (and further identification) to the Military Headquarters of the towns.

This time I went alone, and it was a curious experience to be the only woman in a long train filled with officers and soldiers on their way to the front. And not merely the only woman, the only civilian. In my carriage were several officers, tall handsome men from Northern (Nordic) France, very smart in their horizon-blue uniforms. They looked interesting and intelligent and I should have liked to talk to them. But when they had anything to say to one another they went out into the corridor and whispered. In my presence they were mute. I wished I had worn a black wig and stained my skin. Blondes were at a discount in France. No doubt they thought I was a German spy who had hoodwinked the Government, for they knew I would not have been on that train without permission from the highest authorities.

## V

At Châlons I was told at the hotel that I must go to the Préfecture at once and show my credentials. They were unable to give me a room until I had done so.

Well it was I had been given that letter by the Ministère de la Guerre! My passport would have availed me nothing within that sacrosanct preserve. As it was, the sharp eyes of that man seemed to bore straight through to the back of my head and he asked me searching questions; but finally I was graciously given permission to remain in Châlons.

The next step, after a brief unsavoury lunch at the hotel, was to go to Military Headquarters and obtain permission to visit the hospitals. I looked in vain for a cab. Such luxuries no longer existed in Châlons and there was nothing to do but walk, directed and redirected, to my destination, which was on the outskirts of the town. •

It was a melancholy walk through street after street of shuttered houses, for Châlons had been 'evacuated' long

since. Gardens were heavily coated with dust. Fountains had ceased to play. Statues lay broken.

At the Military Headquarters it was my good fortune to find an amiable officer with, it was apparent, no aversion to blondes, for, after reading my letter, he at once placed a military car at my disposal.

I visited several hospitals and saw enough harrowing sights and heard enough harrowing stories of bombs dropped from above to furnish me with abundant material! We may discount a good many of the 'German outrages' as due to the neuroses of war, but there is no more question that they dropped bombs on hospitals in the War zone than that they attacked hospital ships with their submarines. A *Taube* had paid this region its respects a few days before and I was shown a room it had wrecked. Two patients had been killed. I scanned the radiant blue sky with some anxiety.

Châlons exhausted in two days, I went on to Bar-le-Duc, which was still closer to the front, and descended from the train with a crowd of soldiers who were to take another train for Verdun. I had been told that as this frequently happened it was a favourite pastime of the *Taubes* to be on hand to drop bombs, and I was not anxious to linger, particularly when I saw the shattered glass of the awning.

The station was some distance from the town, and again there were no cabs. Nor porters. I had a bag, and the day was very hot. A long, dusty, unshaded, unpaved road lay in front of me. A polite *poilu* told me he was sorry he was unable to leave the station, for he would have been delighted to carry my bag – and then begged me to leave as quickly as possible; he thought he saw a dark speck on the unclouded sky. I was glad to infer that he was mistaken, for I heard no report as I plodded up that hot and dusty road, cursing war and all that pertained to it.

I reached the town. My attention was immediately attracted by large black letters painted on the lower stones of



the houses. *Cave Voutée. Cave Voutée. Cave Voutée* ran the continuous legend, and induced a prickling of the spine. I wondered if I should have to flee with the rest of the populace to those cellars, were the city bombarded from above during my visit, but concluded that I had less objection to exciting adventure than to carrying my bag on a hot day.

I entered the hotel. Officers in their horizon-blue uniforms were standing about the lobby, sitting in the dining-room. The *cassiere* looked at me with positive hatred when I asked for a room. I could not have a room. Every room was taken by officers on a brief leave from the front. Was there any other hotel open in Bar-le-Duc? There was not. What time did the next train leave for Paris? At five o'clock.

That, at least, would give me time to visit the hospitals, and I entered the crowded dining-room. Once more I was the only woman, and a dead silence fell upon the table to which I was shown. By this time I was so cross that I would have welcomed a display of open hostility. But the French are always polite!

The food was not bad, although abominably served, and the plates and table-cloth none too clean. In a few moments, however, I forgot food, service, my own appetite. The table was crawling with flies. Large, fat, sluggish, viscous flies. I knew where those flies had come from, why they were so fat and sluggish. They had battered on the fields of Verdun and travelled hence on the tops of *camions*. I left the table precipitately.

But I recovered, bought chocolate and bread at a little shop, and then proceeded to military headquarters. There I was obliged to sit outside for an hour until the officers strolled in, talking animatedly and manipulating toothpicks. Again I was given a military car, and, after visiting the hospitals and witnessing more horrid sights and hearing more horrid stories, the amiable soldier-chauffeur drove me about until my train was almost due. When we parted he

advised me to watch out for *Taubes* and if I saw one approaching to run as far from the station as possible!

*Taubes*, however, were on duty elsewhere, and I arrived in Paris safely at midnight. There were three melancholy horsecabs before the dark station. Two of the dispirited drivers refused to go to Passy, but a heavy bribe induced the third to undertake the adventure. The ancient nag walked all the way. Then I had to ring the gate bell for ten minutes before I was admitted. Such was France in war time.

## VI

I CALLED on Madame d'Andigné at her office next morning, and found her very depressed. Not a favourable reply had she received to any of the letters she had written to her family and friends in America. The other members of our *œuvre* had had no better fortune. It looked as if the generosity of Americans was exhausted and *Le Bien-être des Blessés* doomed to failure. I cheered her up with an account of my adventures in the War Zone and went home with her to lunch, where the Marquis told me that I should be permitted to go to Nancy, which was so close to the front that I would hear the guns.

I was summoned next day to the War Office and told by my Royalist that the Government would place a military car at my disposal, as well as a French officer to act as escort, on condition that I would find an American officer to share the responsibility. And where, I demanded, was I to find an American officer in France? My friend replied there were several who had come over on various missions, and advised me to go to the American War Relief Clearing House. I went there, with little hope, and stated my dilemma to Mr. H. C. Beatty. 'Certainly,' he said. And, almost literally, he pressed a button and out popped an American

officer in full uniform. I am sorry to say that I have forgotten his name as well as that of the Frenchman, but both made themselves agreeable and were pleasant companions.

Madame Lyon went with me. Her son was in the hottest fighting of the Battle of the Somme, and, consumed with anxiety, she was glad of the diversion.

It was an old rattletrap of a car, the best they could spare, and we were obliged to travel rather slowly through long stretches of quiet country where men were at work mending the roads that suffered from an almost constant procession of heavy *camions* to and from the front; through deserted villages, or villages where one saw but a few women, old men, no children; past evacuated towns. There was no other evidence of war in that peaceful country-side where the birds sang, and, occasionally, women worked in the fields. When we stopped at an inn for lunch we saw convalescent soldiers fishing along the banks of a stream.

We arrived at Nancy shortly before dark and Madame Lyon went at once to bed. Opposite our hotel was one that had been wrecked by a *Taube* two days before. While I was sitting at dinner in a large pleasant dining-room with my two officers, the iron shutters rattled down and the *maitre d'hôtel* came up to us with a very grave face. 'It is my duty to tell you, madame and messieurs,' he said, 'that there is a *Taube* over the city and to advise you to go to the cellar.' At the same moment we heard the pop-pop of anti-aircraft guns.

I felt a sinking sensation in my legs. My companions did not even look up. 'Are you going to the cellar?' I asked those sons of war. 'Certainly not,' they said, and went on eating their excellent dinner. I decided to be bombed in their company rather than in a dark cellar with hysterical females and possibly rats.

Nothing happened. Nor the next morning when Madame Lyon saw another *Taube*, which circled about for a time and

then flew off. I have concluded that I must be a mascot, for something dire is always about to happen in my vicinity and never does.

I lay awake part of that night listening to the guns. It was not so much a sound as a vibration that shook the atmosphere, far more uncanny and mysterious than sound. It exercised a curious morbid fascination. And at last I was as close to the front as I would ever get, and closer than any other American woman had been. I should have liked to go to Verdun, but probably the War Office would have blown up if I had suggested it, and no d'Andigné influence could avail me there.

Madame Lyon and I visited the hospitals, and once more I was treated to an example of the French love of talk. She would lean over foot-board after foot-board and hold a long conversation with the patient. He would give her a minute account of his wounds and she would relate the particulars of others in the Paris hospitals. She would inquire into all the details of his family history, and if he had left a wife or sweetheart behind him she was volubly sympathetic. I walked up and down restlessly, occasionally muttering in her ear.

'*Ma chère,*' she said to me, as we left one of those hospitals, 'you are, without exception, the most impatient woman I have ever known. You no sooner enter a place than you want to leave it!' I told her that I was used to registering impressions in a flash, and refrained from adding that I was as American as she was French.

We were at the station when a hospital train came in from the front, laden with wounded. Those hospital trains had two or three berths in every compartment, and each had its occupant. They were transferred to ambulances as quickly as possible, and some of the stretchers dripped with blood. For some reason a poilu was left behind and sat on the step of a shed, his head sunk on his knees, blood flowing from

his face. In the enclosure beyond, two German prisoners had been hastily deposited, and they sat there on the straw, looking very sullen. Why, I cannot say, this incident impressed me more with the barbarism and stupidity of war than any sight I had witnessed.

I met Coué at Nancy! We went to a chemist shop to buy some trifle, and of course Madame Lyon had a pleasant conversation with the plump middle-aged proprietor who was destined to an evanescent and somewhat comical fame.

## VII

My work was finished. I said good-bye to all my friends and went to an hotel in Paris for the night; I must take an early train for Bordeaux next morning and Passy cabs were not to be relied upon. I had just got into bed when there was a knock at my door and a page-boy announced through the panel that M. le Marquis and Mme la Marquise d'Andigné were calling.

It was very kind of them to come to bid me farewell once more, but I was tired and nothing would have induced me to dress again. I told the boy to present my excuses to M. le Marquis, but to ask Madame to come upstairs to my room.

The moment she entered I knew she had come for no such sentimental reason as to say good-bye a second time. She looked serious and harassed and determined as she dropped into a chair beside the bed. Nor did she waste any time in amenities.

'I am in the depths of despair!' she exclaimed. 'You must help me! Not the promise of a five-cent piece has come from America. What are we to do if you fail us? When I think of all those poor men dying for want of proper food - I cannot sleep at night!'

'But of course!' I said. 'I shall publish those War-zone articles as soon as I return. Several are already written. I am sure the *Times* will be glad to have them, for they come under the head of news.'

She shook her head vigorously. 'That will not be enough. Organization is needed. You must form a branch of the *œuvre* in New York. . . .'

'What!' I almost leaped from the bed. 'I? Why, I have never even been on the board of a charity organization in my life. I know nothing whatever of such things.'

'You can do it. I know you can do it. I have noticed how you walk over obstacles and go straight for anything you want. You never did anything else before that you have done over here. I *know* that if you take *Le Bien-être des Blessés* in hand you will make a success of it. No one else can or will. Now, promise me, promise me!'

'But! But! But! I don't like to promise anything I am not certain of carrying through. Of course I'll do what I can. I'll speak to certain influential women I know. . . .'

'No use! They will do nothing. They are all tied up. Every rich woman we know in New York is working for *œuvres* that were formed early in the War. You must form an organization yourself and raise money systematically – as others have done.' She gave me a side-glance. 'Your rival, Edith Wharton, is doing splendid work, and has already been decorated.'

I replied equably: 'She has done wonderful work and long may it flourish. As for decorations, nothing would induce me to accept one, after the nasty things I have heard French women say about the motives of those who have.'

Then she wrung her hands, and I thought she would burst into tears. Would I not help her? What should she do if I did not? She had no one else to turn to. I was her only hope. What, *what* would become of *Le Bien-être des Blessés*?

I was very fond of her. I felt very sorry for her. Moreover,

I knew she would sit there till morning unless I gave her a definite promise. With many misgivings I did so, and she departed radiant.

## VIII

BUT I had a very definite intention of unloading that enterprise upon someone else if it could possibly be done. And not only because I shrank from such an undertaking, but because I knew my incapacity and felt there were others who would be far more likely to make a success of it than I.

A day or two after my arrival in New York I met Mrs. August Belmont on the street and offered to present *Le Bien-être des Blessés* to her on a golden platter. But she said 'No thank you.' She had enough already on her hands. Then I went to see Mrs. Charles Alexander (Hattie Crocker of California), who was noted for her generosity and charitable activities. But she too shook her head. She was already working for five *œuvres* in France and she had neither the time nor resource to take on another. She told me, however, that she would lend her name to any committee I might form and back me up when necessary. We discussed other rich women who were interested in France, but she advised me to waste no time on any of them; they were already as deeply engaged as herself and Mrs. Belmont.

There was nothing for it! I must do the thing myself – or write to Madame d'Andigné that I was a failure. Horrible thought! By this time my pride was up and I was determined to succeed or die.

I took my troubles to John Moffat, an Englishman who had come to New York shortly after the declaration of war as the agent of certain American women married to Englishmen who were raising money for hospitals they had taken over. This humble beginning had developed into a great organization known as The International Allied Relief, and

Mr. Moffat was sending thousands of dollars to England, France, and Belgium by every steamer. I knew he would advise me, for I had been able to do him several favours and we were on friendly terms.

He did more than advise me. He offered at once to take me into the fold. The first thing to do was to form an imposing committee whose names would be printed on our stationery and appeals. He attended to this delicate matter himself, and Mrs. W. K. Vanderbilt and others whose names exercise a hypnotic power over the democratic American public were induced to lend their patronage on condition that nothing further would be expected of them.

That was the first step. The next, Mr. Moffat informed me, was to write 'sob-sister' appeals, which, attractively printed in leaflet form, would be sent out to the thousands of rich men and women on the lists of the I. A. R.

Sob-sister appeals! It was a new departure for me, but after struggling harder than I had ever struggled over a book, I managed it.

Meanwhile I had written a series of articles in the form of letters that were published on the editorial page of the *Times*, and through that medium I raised some twenty thousand dollars, the first money I sent to France. The publicity was even more valuable. Before long *Le Bien-être du Blessés* was the most famous of all the French *œuvres*, in New York at least, and the path was smoothed for more organized appeals.

The thing was a success from the first. Money came rolling in. I had stipulated that all contributions should be sent to I.A.R. headquarters, as I had no desire to involve myself in a possible financial mess. But hundreds of persons sent me dollar bills, some of them naively admitting they wanted an autograph letter in return. One German woman offered me a cheque for five thousand dollars on condition that I would put it through my own bank and never reveal



her name. She could not afford to get into trouble with her compatriots, but her sympathies were as warm for the wounded of France as for those of her own race. I am not positive, but think she sent me another cheque for the same amount later on.

All this involved an immense amount of correspondence. Also, I was obliged frequently to go to factories and buy large quantities of condensed milk, canned soups, fruits, other delicacies, and then besiege shipping offices to export them. The time came when I had to buy trucks! I should have found great difficulty in transporting my wares – for the boats were heavy-laden – if it had not been for Miss Anne Morgan. But after she brought her influence to bear I had no further trouble.

So flourishing was the *œuvre* before long that I had to send over a personnel for the canteens and dietary kitchens Madame d'Andigné had established in the War zone. This meant interviewing numerous applicants, to say nothing of more correspondence, and looking up credentials.

At first I had rebelled bitterly. My time was no longer my own. I felt more like a locomotive than an independent being. To write anything but articles for the *Delineator* and the *Times*, to say nothing of those leaflets, was impossible. It was rarely that I had done anything I had not wanted to do. My experience with Mr. Phelan and Mrs. Fiske had been brief and something of a joke, but this was deadly serious and might go on for years. Where was my vaunted liberty?

But I soon got over all that. I became as vitally interested in the success of *Le Bien-être des Blessés* as Madame d'Andigné herself. Nothing would have induced me to resign the American Presidency of the *œuvre* to another and return to the peaceful ways of authorship.\* 'Doing good.'

\* Occasionally there were intervals when no more money was needed for the moment, and I wrote two short novels, *The White Morning* and *The Avalanche*. They were very slight, but the latter made a good picture for Elsie Ferguson.

My ego was quite as inflated as when bent upon reclaiming Ernest Dowson.

It had another effect that I should have anticipated as little as my devotion to a cause; so scant a knowledge have we of our depths! Although I never could bring myself to ask for money personally, even from such old friends as Mr. Phelan (who did give me generous cheques, however), I felt myself becoming so unscrupulous that I would have picked pockets if I could have done so undetected. I would have robbed a bank. I had never had any great sense of the value of money, never had any desire for the responsibilities of wealth, but now money seemed to me the one supreme good on earth. I wondered if I were becoming completely demoralized, wondered still more at that strange *mélange* we call human nature. Ever since, when I have met women who devote their lives to charity I have regarded them with suspicion.

## I X

WHEN we were about to enter the War I was asked to write articles for the newspapers on the iniquities of the Germans in order to help stimulate enlistment. Virulent was a weak word for those articles. As I look back I think I must have given much energy to the cultivation of hate, for it was a new and interesting passion. Heretofore I had always prided myself upon never condescending to hate anyone; it was too great a compliment. But now I revelled in hate.

Not that I had waited to visit the hospitals of France to boil and ferment. Hatred of Germany coincided with 'the crime of that country in plunging Europe into war' and 'the Belgian atrocities.' Mr. Wilson at the outbreak of the War had requested the American newspapers to refrain from partisanship and stirring up antagonism to the many Germans living in the United States. But nothing was said

about individuals expressing themselves, and the *Times* permitted me to let off steam in its dignified columns. There I gave rein to my sentiments in such unmistakable terms that when I was in France I was warned by the Government that if I went to Switzerland it would be well to avoid the German frontier, as there was a price on my head! Dr. Devol maintained that my illness in 1915 was due to the poisons engendered by this passion of hatred, and little else. Perhaps. But I rather think it was Mrs. Atherton's sopitas; empanaditas; casuela; enchiladas; unitas; carne con Chile; lentijas; charquican; sopaipillas; carne con aji, etc.

But it was a great experience nevertheless, although it exhausted my capacity, and I have never been able to hate anyone or anything since. So, no doubt, do men and women burn out their power of loving when too intemperate. But what is life without living?

I had an amusing experience regarding decorations. I had told Madame d'Andigné that nothing would induce me to accept one, but this was difficult for a Frenchwoman (as she was in effect) to believe, and no doubt she pulled wires, for at the end of six months I received a citation from the French Government for the Médaille d'honneur. I returned it forthwith, announcing that it was my pleasure to serve France without reward. As such a thing had probably never happened before I expected an ironic blast. But I heard nothing more until a year or two later when I received another citation, this time for the Médaille de la République Française. As I could hardly make the gesture a second time I went to the French Consulate and accepted it.

Meanwhile Mr. Phelan had been elected to the United States Senate (in 1915), and I visited him in Washington when I could spare the time. Some five months after my return from France and shortly before the first citation, I was spending a few days at his house, when he came home one afternoon full of indignation. A woman I had sent over

to work in Madame d'Andigné's office had been decorated. And I had not! What was the French Government thinking of? .

I told him I was determined to accept no decorations and gave him my reasons. But that made no impression on him whatever. Shortly after my return to New York he wrote me that he had spoken to M. Jusserand, the French Ambassador, who had promised to write to his Government.

I immediately wrote to the Ambassador asking him to do nothing of the sort. I gave him polite reasons, employing all the elaboration of phrase expected by the French, but toward the end of the letter the devil entered into me, and I added, 'You know, M. Jusserand, there is only one way left in this world to be distinguished and that is *not* to be decorated by France.' A nice thing to say, and I should have been ashamed of myself. But it was irresistible.

Mr. Phelan was furious with me. He wrote me that Jusserand had descended upon him at a party waving his arms and almost shouting his indignation. I had 'insulted France.'

His indignation was far-reaching. As time went on I thought it odd that I did not receive the citation for the Légion d'Honneur, to which the other two decorations were the usual preliminary. It was not until I was in Paris in 1925 that I heard the reason. Madame d'Andigné told me that she and her husband had made repeated applications, but had been balked in every instance by M. Jusserand; the Government was willing, but the French Ambassador to the United States, who must countersign the application for this most important of the decorations, was not! He refused his signature, and it was not until he resigned that the honour was bestowed upon me. The ceremony took place in the American Embassy. Mr. Herrick, who had not the faintest idea of what it was all about, filled up his little speech with praises of *The Conqueror!*

## X

THERE is but one other episode worth relating of my personal contacts with the War. Just after the Armistice was declared the *Times* asked me to go to Paris as a special correspondent. I was not expected to interview anyone, nor participate in any of the duties of the resident staff, but to write of such impressions as I might derive through my large circle of acquaintances.

I wrote several letters that were printed on the front page of the *Times*, so I infer they met with the approval of the all-powerful Mr. Van Anda, although I have not the vaguest remembrance of what they were about. When I had been in Paris about a month I met Northcliffe in the lift of my hotel one afternoon and he came up to my room for a long talk. I had christened him Warwick – he had been in New York as head of the British Commission – as he certainly had a good deal to do with the making and unmaking of Prime Ministers. I asked him if he were having any trouble with Lloyd George. ‘Oh,’ he replied gaily, ‘I have to keep my hand on him. He wobbles! He wobbles!’

I told him that I was in Paris as a special correspondent of the *Times*, and, having no training as a newspaper woman, found it rather difficult to find subjects. He said at once, with the spontaneous generosity so characteristic of him, that he would give me material for a letter that would be news of the first water.

The American newspapers, he thought, had little real understanding of the Bolsheviks. Sensations had followed one another rapidly in Russia; there might be more to come, and in any case Russia, the last stronghold in barbarism in Europe, was of less interest to civilized modern America than the Peace Conference (in which the President of the United States was a dominating figure) and the question of indemnities. Only the parlour socialists hailed the Bolsheviks

as men of lofty and beautiful ideals whose mission it was to regenerate the earth. To the rest Bolshevism was just one more revolution, whose hideous cruelties made interesting reading, and would no doubt wear itself out in time.

But Northcliffe regarded Lenin and Trotsky as a world menace. He knew from his secret agents that they meditated an immediate invasion of Poland, and, that object accomplished, they would sweep over Germany – and establish Bolshevism in the very heart of Europe. The Poles had called out every man under forty-five. (This attempted subjection of Poland was delayed for two years owing to the unexpected activities of the 'White' armies, but there was no doubt of the correctness of this information.)

Northcliffe knew the brains behind the Bolshevik Revolution and was filled with forebodings long before the rest of the world viewed it with anything but disgust. 'I believe Lenin and Trotsky to be the two most dangerous men alive,' he said. 'Russia, disorganized, flaccid, is theirs to remould, and they'll poison all Europe if they can. There is certainly enough material to work on both among the victors and the conquered! The aftermath of war is often more dangerous to civilization than war itself. Now! Fill your letter to the *Times* with the dangers of Bolshevism and make it strong! America is taking it far too calmly.'

I wrote the letter as soon as he left. It was the only letter I sent from Paris that the *Times* did not publish on its front page!

When Northcliffe went away that day he promised to see me frequently and give me material for other letters. I could rely upon him and worry no further. But a few days later he was, owing to a throat affection, ordered to the South of France. Thence he went from one seclusion to another. I never saw him again.



## BOOK IX

### I

IT had by no means been all work and no play during those War years in New York. On the third Sunday of the month I held a reception, and it grew in popularity until there were sometimes over a hundred guests – who made such a noise that I retreated to my bedroom at intervals and shut the door. *Why* do Americans always talk at the top of their voices in a crowd? The high-pitched chatter in the restaurants is the first thing that strikes one after a return from Europe.

Elizabeth Jordan asked me if she might bring a young author, in whom she was interested, to one of these Sundays. She had great faith in his talent and went so far as to predict that he would make a reputation for himself in American letters. His name was Sinclair Lewis. I do not recall any conversation I may have had with him but remember his red head bobbing above the throng.

Others who came often or off and on were Carl Van Vechten – who suggested these memoirs and gave me no peace until I consented to write them; his wife Fania Maranoff; Charley Towne, who usually came in cursing the subway; Owen Johnson and his current wife 'Cobina'; Avery Hopwood, who sometimes took me to his first nights and was depressingly bored at his own witticisms; Belle Greene, the highly personalized presiding young genius of the Morgan Library; Mrs. Schuyler Van Rensselaer, New York's woman of letters whom I most admired; Amy Lowell with her buoyant bulk and pouncing mind; Honoré Willsie Morrow, looking like a Burne-Jones out of the North-West; Ellen Glasgow, sometimes spending a winter in New York, oftener on a brief visit; Duc de Richelieu and his pretty little



American wife; the Irvin S. Cobbs; Albert M. Bagby 'the Impresario of New York'; Frances Hodgson Burnett; Kate Douglas Wiggin; Mary Austin; Henry Sydnor Harrison, of *Queed* fame; Rose (Kewpie) O'Neil; William and Mary Roberts; Dorothy Gilman; Wallace Irwin and his handsome Letitia; Fannie Hurst, always pretty but less beautiful then than now; Robert and Charlotte Hallowell of *The New Republic*; the group with whom I sat at the weekly luncheons of the Authors' League - Gelett Burgess, Ellis Parker Butler, Jesse Lynch Williams; Leroy Scott (and his accomplished wife); George Barr McCutcheon, Joseph Louis Vance, Rupert Hughes, Rex Beach; Hildegard Hawthorne; Henry James Forman, Arthur Row, Lawrence Rising, Rutger Jewett; Martin Littleton and James Beck, rather a relief after such a plethora of scribes; Margaret Anglin, always the charming woman of the world off the stage and never the actress; Ina Claire, then in her first dazzling bloom; Nance O'Neil and Alfred Hickman; Emily Stevens; Louis Anspacher and Katherine Kidder; Isabel Irving; the Arnold Brunners; M. de Billy of the French High Commission, who frequently came over from Washington, a perfectly delightful man whose tragic death shortly after the War's finish was a loss both to his country and his friends; Edith Haggin de Long, of one of the old families of San Francisco but for many years a resident of New York; Elisabeth Marbury, the wittiest woman I have ever known; Mrs. Frank Carolan, now Mrs. Schemmerhorn, who liked to surround herself with a few choice spirits and recite poetry; Mrs. William Jay, to whom all the literati succumbed; Rita Lydig, always a Velazquez in a modern frame; Mrs. Alexander who probably had never guessed there were so many authors in New York; Maria de Barril, a cousin of my old friends the Barredas and 'Social' Secretary of New York; Mr. George Hartmann of my bank, who grabbed all the money I made before I could spend it and invested it to the

highest advantage – and his wife, just returned from cultivating her voice in Italy; Dr. Devol who liked to impress us as a society butterfly but was the sternest man in a sick-room I have ever known, and his distinguished friend Dr. Trexler, President of the United Lutheran Synod of New York; Mrs. Butler; Provost and Mrs. Carpenter; Talcott Williams, head of the School of Journalism, and other professors of the University; Mrs. Kline, a great friend of ours whom I must mention; and Mr. Phelan when he came over from Washington. These are all the names I recall, but there were many others who came and went. A few of the guests were asked to remain for supper and these invitations were never refused, for Muriel is a marvellous housekeeper. This was before Prohibition and there were no cocktails; I never thought of them, nor, apparently, did anyone else. To-day any hostess who attempted to entertain without serving liquor would be boycotted.

These Sundays were not renewed after my second return from France, for Muriel had taken a course in massage at Columbia and the New York Orthopædic, and was at a military hospital in Louisville, Ky. Personally I had had enough of them. The *salon* was all very well for Madame de Staël who could sit in the middle of the room and pontificate, or for Madame Récamier who listened '*avec séduction*,' but in these days the hostess does nothing but move about and stand about listening to scrappy conversation, wondering if she has forgotten to introduce anyone to the celebrities he came to meet, and wishing they would all go home. I like the small group, and as for men, I have always preferred one at a time.

## I I

I VISITED Mr. Phelan in Washington several times, as I have already mentioned. He had a large house, and either held a

dinner party every night or took his guests to one elsewhere. I met Mr. Taft, then Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States, at one of these dinners, and he told us a rather caustic story of Woodrow Wilson (our President!) and our still celebrated ex-President Grover Cleveland. Some one asked Mr. Cleveland what he thought of Mr. Wilson's chances of being nominated for the Presidency. 'Well,' said Mr. Cleveland, 'I think he'll be nominated and elected, for Nature designed him for political success. He has the tongue of an angel, the brain of a Pitt, and he's the damndest liar that ever lived.' And Mr. Taft shook in all his well-tailored acres.

(I never hear Taft's name mentioned that I do not recall that wise and witty summary when he was President: 'An amiable gentleman surrounded by men who know exactly what they want.')

The Pattens, five sisters, whose house was known as the 'Irish Legation,' gave me a reception, to which many of the eminent were bidden, but the only one with whom I managed to have any conversation was Mr. Spring-Rice, the British Ambassador, whom I found then and during all my visits one of the most agreeable men in Washington. Who the others were at that reception I have forgotten, but then I met so many of the eminent in the Capital, where eminents rival the sands of the sea, that I recall them only as a composite mass.

Mr. Phelan's dinners were the most remarkable in Washington. He never invited anyone until the day before, and nothing could induce him to change this habit. In Washington, invitations are sent out weeks ahead, and if you do not observe this rule you take what you can get. Mr. Phelan occasionally found those he wanted disengaged but more often he did not. Then he called up at haphazard, and the consequence was that deadly enemies often sat at the same tables, divorcées, political rivals, pro-Allies, Pro-Germans.

(Not that this ever disturbed *him*!) The butler was a German and popularly believed to be a spy who carried all he overheard to his Embassy. But he was a good butler and Mr. Phelan refused to part with him, despite remonstrances from all quarters. Mr. Phelan always did exactly as he pleased and never was able to understand why he should not. The result, no doubt, of being born to unlimited wealth and never chastened by matrimony!

Nothing interfered with his popularity in Washington, however. An eligible bachelor, a hospitable house with a fine cook, an abundant cellar, and a house admirably adapted for entertaining, a charm of personality that would have been the fortune of a poor man, and a reputation quickly achieved of being not only a hard-working senator of the first class, but one whom the breath of political scandal would never even brush in passing. A lucky man, Mr. Phelan, and he knew it. I think he was as thoroughly contented with life as so highly intelligent and thoughtful a man could be.

At one of these conglomerate dinners I sat beside the Chilean Minister. Of course, we always talked war, and I delivered myself freely of my dislike of all things German. He was what is described in old novels as a man of full habit. In other words, he had a claret-coloured complexion, which, I noticed, deepened to the richness of old port. Even his eyes became suffused, and his remarks more and more abbreviated until he seemed to fall into a fuming silence. I suspected what was the matter with him, but as he was a stupid man it amused me to bait him; he was violently pro-German, but hadn't the courage to admit it, surrounded as he was by passionate pro-Allies. He dropped dead of apoplexy next day, and Mr. Phelan vowed that I had killed him!

Truxton and Marie Beale were old friends of mine and, as they were also great friends of Mr. Phelan, I saw them

frequently. Marie was – and is – one of the handsomest and most popular women in Washington, and I never have met anyone with a more authentic social talent. She had a good deal to live down, for Truxton's first wife, a daughter of 'Blaine of Maine,' had a large following in Washington, and Truxton, who hated Society, did nothing to help her, but she won out with her gifts and tact. We found much amusement in observing the manœuvres of certain handsome girls and young widows who cherished hopes of that quite hopeless senator, James D. Phelan, eligible bachelor.

### I I I

MURIEL returned to California a few months after the War was over. I followed not long after, and Dr. Ebright, the family doctor, ordered me into hospital for a major operation. I had had several dangerous illnesses, and any number of 'attacks' that were increasing in frequency. The seeds had been sown by my mother-in-law's hot Spanish dishes, and now, Dr. Ebright informed me, the pylorus was nearly closed and I must have a new one. The operation was an immense success, and four weeks later I was in the Hotel Lyndon at Los Gatos at work on a new novel.

But my mental vitality was still low, although, with renewed physical vigour, I failed to realize this important fact, for I wrote easily enough; but later when I read *Sisters-in-Law* between covers I knew that it was the most shallow and uneven novel I had written since my earliest period. It was good enough in the beginning and at the end, but fell down in the middle, something I often criticized severely in other writers, but a sin I had always prided myself upon never committing.

No book I ever wrote received such high and unanimous praise from the critics! But critics, as I have observed be-

fore, are quaint creatures, and largely governed by the mood of the moment. Or perhaps they thought it safe to approve of anything that diverged so little from the normal, offended no prejudices, and called for no exercise of thought whatever.

I then spent nine months at Hollywood, where, as one of six 'Eminent Authors' it was hoped by the optimistic Mr. Goldwyn I would write original scenarios for the screen. I wrote one story – I never attempted to write a 'scenario' – which was made into a picture, beautiful to look at; all that could be said for it. They had previously filmed *Tower of Ivory*; a picture, which, as it bore almost no resemblance to the book, I had persuaded them to rename. (They had introduced as *deus ex machina* an escaped convict, and the actor who took the part of the hero looked like a bell-hop. Shade of Lambton!) According to the terms of the contract they had the privilege of using anything I had ever written, or might publish during the three years it covered. It had been understood that I should not be asked to write anything directly for the screen, but Mr. Goldwyn begged me to reconsider this decision and come to Hollywood, and as I had nothing to do at the moment and was always ready for something new, I went.

I shall not dwell upon that experience in Hollywood. My only consolation was the Clayton Hamiltons, charming people to whom I shall ever be grateful for alleviating my lot.

But there were many other interesting persons in Hollywood at that time, aside from the kings and queens and pawns of the screen. Cecil de Mille, not to be outdone by Goldwyn and his 'Eminent Authors,' had imported from England Edward Knoblock, the popular playwright, Somerset Maugham (less superior than of old), Elinor Glyn, looking much the same as when I had met her twenty years before at Lady Jeune's, and Sir Gilbert Parker.

Mary Roberts Rinchart and Alice Duer Miller, Gouv-

erneur Morris, Charles Kenyon, Thompson Buchanan, Rupert Hughes, and Elmer Rice, were also there at the beck of the Goldwyn Studio. Whether we liked our first experience with Hollywood methods or not, one thing must be said for these 'Studios': their remuneration was extremely generous and equally assured. And we were to be paid a certain stipulated sum during the term of our contracts, whether our work were acceptable or not. As far as I am concerned, this agreement was faithfully kept. And that is the only good thing I have to say about the life of a helpless author on a Hollywood lot.

I had intended, when I arrived, to stay at the Beverly Hills Hotel, which, if lonesome, was, at least, comfortable. But Clayton Hamilton persuaded me to go to the Hollywood Hotel, which was not only in the centre of the town and convenient for himself – he drove me over to the Goldwyn Studio in Culver City every morning where I spent a long and futile day – but it was the headquarters of all that was most interesting in Hollywood.

It was interesting, no doubt of that, and nonentities came from the East every winter to sit on its piazza and in its large dining-room to stare at the celebrities. Not only did many of the screen folk live in that truly abominable hotel (I believe it is vastly improved now), but at this particular time nearly all the authors had been herded into it. My room was in the front and had a little balcony, but no more could be said for it. It was barely large enough to turn round in, the furniture was worn out, and when it rained I would be awakened by rain splashing on my face from an undiscoverable leak in the roof. Uncounted times I sprang out of bed, moved it, fetched a milk pan, obligingly provided by the management, and then was kept awake by the pattering of rain on the tin. The food was as bad as the rest of it, and why any of us remained there is one of the mysteries. But we did, and there was always a waiting list,

while the beautiful and luxurious Beverly Hills Hotel, a little out of town, was half empty.

Poor 'Eddie' Knoblock! He is a charming person and we soon became friends. One day he sent me word that he was ill. Would I go up and see him? I found him in a miserable little room under the roof, shivering in a dressing-gown on his bed – that famous dramatist who must have made a fortune with his *Kismet*, *Milestones*, and other plays that had unprecedented runs in London and 'on Broadway.' But in that crowded hotel it was the best he could get and he had arrived even later than I.

He told me that he suffered from rheumatism, poisoned, he believed, on an old tub when he was a King's Messenger during the War. I dismissed this and told him to have his teeth X-rayed.

He did, and had several extracted. His rheumatism was no better. I told him to have his tonsils taken out. He did, poor devil, and spent several days in a miserable apology for a hospital. By this time he had taken a house, and I received a note one day saying that as I had put him to the torture twice, the least I could do was to go to see him. I went, of course, and found him once more huddled in his dressing-gown, but this time in comfortable surroundings. His rheumatism was no better. I feared he would hate me, but was magnanimously forgiven and we are still friends.

## I V

SEVERAL years before Mr. Phelan had bought an estate of some eight hundred acres in Santa Clara County and built himself an Italian villa surrounding three sides of a court in the rear. He named it Montalvo, in memory of the old Spanish author Ordonez de Montalvo, in whose work the word California occurs for the first time. According to his



riotous imagination, this terrestrial paradise was an island inhabited by robust Amazons, griffins, and a few males kept for breeding purposes only. It was a highly romantic yarn, full of colour and startling incident, and the best seller of its day. When Cabrillo sailed into one of our harbours in 1542, he was convinced that at last he had found the 'terrestrial Paradise' he had set out to discover, named that fertile and picturesque stretch of land California, and California it has remained.

At the other end of the court, with its covered galleries into which glass doors opened from the rooms beyond, was a high balustrade, reached by a flight of steps on either side and overlooking a large oval emerald-green swimming pool surrounded by bath-houses on one side and on the other two by a vine-covered loggia. Behind rose an almost perpendicular mountain sombre with a primeval redwood forest, at whose feet was a wide clearing, rising like a gentle amphitheatre; facing this a stage had been erected for outdoor performances.

In season the garden was an opulent mass of colour. The house stood on a steep rise, and from the broad terrace that ran along the front one had the most superb view, it is quite possible, of any country place in America. Below stretched the long sloping lawns, with a Greek temple separating them from the heavy undergrowth beyond, and then came the great Santa Clara Valley, never burnt up in summer like so many California landscapes, for it was set with orchards always green save in the spring when it was a mass of white blossoms, varied here and there by the pink of the almond tree and the vivid yellow of the acacia. Far away were the high mountains of the Coast Range, delicately coloured in pastel shades of blue and pink, Mount Hamilton with its white observatory standing out sharply in the clear thin air. Unless the valley were swimming in a blue haze quivering with heat the town of San José, eleven

miles away, was also clearly defined against the foothills.

The terrace was approached by a broad high flight of steps, but the main entrance was on the north side where there was another terrace, enclosed in glass, vine-covered, and furnished with lounging chairs and marbles. Out of this terrace opened the library with crowded book-shelves rising to the ceiling, which in turn opened into an immense central living-room, and beyond was the lofty dining-room hung with crimson brocade brought from Mexico. The billiard room was across the hall from the library, and, like the living-room, opened on the court. Upstairs were six large bedrooms, each with its bath and balcony, and, on the other side of the drive, overhanging the creek and almost hidden in the woods, was the Guest House, to which bachelor visitors were generally relegated.

The main house, luxuriously and beautifully furnished, with many valuable pictures and works of art that Mr. Phelan had picked up in Europe, was always dim and cool on the hottest days, although, if there were a large party, down for the day only, they preferred to sit on the terraces and sip iced orange juice and lemonade. Californians have a passion for the out-of-doors which I have never shared. And the glare is intolerable.

I have described Montalvo in detail, not only because I spent the most delightful days of my life there, covering, off and on, some fifteen years, but because the thousands who were entertained there will be glad to be reminded of its beauties.

For Mr. Phelan kept open house, the first to indulge in that hospitable extravagance since the old Ralston days, when Belmont was the focus of social gaieties in California. It is true that my mother-in-law also kept open house in her day, as far as constant entertaining went, but she was far too exclusive to achieve the effect of brilliancy or anything like fame. One rarely met strangers there.

Every visitor of distinction from the East, from Great Britain and other states of Europe, brought letters to Mr. Phelan and was entertained royally at Montalvo. Many, of course, were invited for the day only, as house accommodation was limited; an example of Mr. Phelan's canny foresight, for he never liked too much of anybody. •

Those great luncheons were held, sometimes on the broad terrace, where the guests enjoyed the view if they could stand the glare, sometimes in the court under an awning, or at the foot of the lawns when the company was unusually large or a barbecue was held. There were tables also in the forest in a ravine beside the creek on the northern slope of the mountain, when we were in the mood for a picnic, and where the luncheon was cooked in an open stove. When it was too hot to climb and we were a small party on week-days, we lunched in the loveliest room in the house, a room that looked like a sea-green cave and opened from the dining-room.

My own room was at the head of the stairs, with a pale grey carpet and furnished in pink and white chintz. From the balcony I looked down upon the court with its murmuring fountain, its trees glittering with the plumage of raucous macaws, over the oval emerald-green swimming pool to the towering mountain, less dark and mysterious in spring with its masses of wild lilacs. Other mountains rolled away on the right and behind was the Pacific Ocean.

I spent a good deal of my time on that balcony, which had been furnished for me with a table for books and a cushioned wicker *chaise longue* under an immense orange-coloured umbrella; that hid me from those disporting themselves in the pool. In fact I never left it in the morning until I heard voices in the court, where the guests assembled for luncheon. •

Mr. Phelan was the ideal host. You might die and be buried and resurrected between meals, and he none the

wiser. He did nothing, mercifully, to 'entertain' us, and we felt at liberty to indulge in the suspicion that he forgot all about us when we were out of his sight.

With day guests, of course, it was another matter. They were never deserted for a moment, and it was little wonder that he was known as the Perfect Host. The spirit of hospitality emanated from him. He was an undemonstrative man, but he had the gift of making every one feel that he was the welcome guest and that nothing was too good for him. In the Old California days the host would say to his entering guest: 'The house is yours. Burn it if you will.' Mr. Phelan could never have brought his tongue round to anything so effusive, and never would he have suggested even in jest that anyone might burn his beloved Montalvo, but the spirit of it was in his quiet smiling greeting and in his manifest pleasure in entertaining.

Sometimes there were house-parties of ten or twelve over the week-end, but more often there were not. There was a small inner circle that was generally all that was left at night of the great Sunday parties: Mrs. Harvey, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Fay – Mr. Fay was Mr. Phelan's fidus Achates – Miss Phelan rarely, as she was an invalid, often Muriel, and Mr. Phelan's nephew, Noël Sullivan. At other times there would be Charles Caldwell Dobic, first and foremost of the younger group of California writers; Mrs. Harvey's handsome daughters, Anita Cooper and Geneviève Barron; Helen Wills, of whom Mr. Phelan had a bust made for one of the galleries in the court; Colonel Howland, the life of all parties; and Mrs. Harry Mendell, a brilliant woman of Society then living near by at Los Gatos with an invalid husband. Sometimes Noel would bring his musical friends down and then there would be an impromptu concert in the living-room after dinner. At Christmas there was always a tree with presents for all. The weeks preceding Christmas were an agony for me as I beat my brain trying to think

up a present for Mr. Phelan. What *can* you give a wealthy man who is able to buy everything he wants for himself, and who, moreover, knows exactly what he does want? And yet rich people are ever the most hurt if you do not remember them.

It is curious what memories stand out. The pleasantest memory among thousands I have of Montalvo is dressing in my pretty pink room for dinner, then descending the broad stair to the library where Mrs. Harvey and Mrs. Fay, always beautifully dressed – for there were no informalities at Montalvo – were sitting under the softly shaded lamps gossiping; Noel, always looking as if he had just stepped out of a Velazquez canvas in the Prado, standing restlessly on the hearth rug before the blazing logs – when he didn't come tearing up the drive at the last minute – and Mr. Fay, his genial handsome face buried in the evening newspaper.

Mr. Phelan was never there! Dinner was supposed to be at half-past eight. It was a common legend that when the half-hour struck Mr. Phelan would take his bath followed by a nap. At all events he rarely arrived on the scene before nine. Bland and smiling hospitably, when we greeted him with jeers he would merely raise his eyebrows in innocent surprise.

## V

I ALWAYS sat at Mr. Phelan's right at table, no matter how many distinguished guests might be present, unless the dinner or luncheon were 'given' to some one in particular. Mrs. Harvey was hostess and sat at the foot of the table. In fact she 'ran' Montalvo. Miss Phelan, being an invalid, could give her brother no help, and his nieces were raising families and running establishments of their own.

Mrs. Harvey had two passions, music and housekeeping, and she had taken pity on her bachelor friend, whom she

had known from childhood, and gradually assumed the responsibility of Montalvo in all its domestic phases. As no more expert housekeeper ever lived, it was the most perfectly run house that I, at least, have ever visited, and the bedrooms in particular were the last word in every possible gadget for comfort and convenience. And she was a gay and animated hostess – when she liked the company! Once, when we had one hundred and ten Democrats down for the day, during the Democratic Convention, she basely locked herself in her room, leaving Mrs. Fay and me to bear the brunt.

Mr. Phelan was a sincere patron of the arts. He sent many young men and women to Europe to study, and he liked to encourage gifted young people of all kinds. Every year he had a great luncheon at the foot of the lawn for the blossoming poets of the State College of San José, inviting artists, sculptors, and the local literati to meet them, and afterward the most promising would read their effusions on the stage before the amphitheatre and were awarded prizes. Mrs. Harvey sometimes sneaked off from this culminating festivity also. Callow poets were not to her taste. Once I sneaked off myself, but Mr. Fay was promptly sent after me and I had to hand out the prizes and make a speech!

One of the most interesting of the Montalvo luncheons was given to Nicholas Longworth – in the court at several tables, with a band on the high balustrade, and the macaws squawking an accompaniment. This time I sat at the end of the long table opposite Mr. Phelan with the guest of honour on my right. There were times when I had uphill work with guests of honour, but not with Mr. Longworth! He talked from the moment he sat down until he got up, and most entertainingly. Two others who were equally interesting and no trouble whatever, that I recall, were the Duc d'Alba, and Sir Esmé Howard, the British Ambassador. But gilded roosters for the most part would be better in glass cages to look at.

Sometimes there were literary luncheons and these Mrs. Harvey didn't mind, as she always enjoyed talking to Charles Caldwell Dobie and Sanborn Young, who came with his wife, Ruth Comfort Mitchell. Charles and Kathleen Norris drove over from their ranch in the hills and Mr. and Mrs. Freemont Older from theirs. Peter B. Kyne and his handsome wife; Charmion London; the budding poet, Dorothe Bendon; those already distinguished poets, Charles Erskine Scott Wood and Sara Bard Field; Ednah Aiken; George Sterling, until his tragic death. Generally the luncheon was given to some visiting celebrity, on one occasion to Richard Halliburton, on another to Philip Guedalla.

A welcome guest at parties large and small was Harry Robertson, son of my old friend Alexander. He had a glorious voice and always sang for us with or without an accompaniment. One moonlight night, when the only guests were Dobie, Mrs. Mendell, Helen Wills, and Rowena Mason, he sang to the music of his lute, wandering round the terraces like a minstrel, while we trailed after him, and when we had gone to bed he sat on the stairs and played and sang softly for an hour longer.

Heavenly days and nights at Montalvo – now but an empty shell. Its soul has deserted it – and I use the word *deserted* advisedly, for if Mr. Phelan had obeyed his doctors, could ever have been made to understand that he could not do exactly as he pleased, he would be alive to-day. But perhaps he had had enough of life. He certainly had lived his own to the full, and there was nothing left for him but repetition.

He willed the Guest House to Noël, but Montalvo proper to the San Francisco Art Association. We were standing in the Belvedere on the hill to the right of the house one afternoon, and he was glancing over his broad acres with their woods, their orchards, glowing gardens and sweeping lawns,

when he said with a laugh: 'I suppose I'll look down on all this one of these days and see priests or nuns walking about. My family are all such pious Catholics!' I wondered just what had been in his mind when I read that clause in his will.

But he lived until 1930, and I am far ahead of my story.

## V I

AFTER my return from Hollywood I stayed in San Francisco, when I was not at Montalvo, and grew increasingly restless. I had no book in mind. Not the glimmer of an idea on my mental horizon. It was true that I had had – like all writers, I fancy – these sterile periods before, but they always made me nervous. Each time I was sure that my fiction tract had dried up and that I'd never write another novel. Experience should have taught me better but never did. Moreover, I enjoyed playing about just so long and no longer. Writing was my real life and I was more at home with the people of my imagination than with the best I met in the objective world.

Suddenly I conceived the idea that a book was waiting for me in New York. I had had these 'hunches' before and rarely been disappointed. I packed forthwith and arrived in New York in the spring of 1922.

I went to the hotel known as 37 Madison Avenue, overlooking the Square. It was a very interesting hotel at that time because so many old New York families who had given up their houses lived there; it was well run, and I liked that part of New York.

I idled for a month or two, wondering where on earth that novel was lurking and if my mind had really gone sterile. Some years before I had taken a course of treatment from a German psychotherapist for insomnia, and he had



assured me that, provided I kept my body in perfect condition, my brain free of unpoisoned blood, and had no microbous disease, my creative faculty would remain active as long as I lived. There were scientists in Germany working as brilliantly in extreme old age as in their middle years, and had not Sophocles written *Œdipus Colonus* when he was past eighty? But I had had severe illnesses since then, including pneumonia which was certainly 'microbous,' that might well have poisoned my brain. I had been satisfied with nothing I had written since *Perch of the Devil*. I was in perfect health now, but my mental dynamo refused to tune up.

However. . . .

One morning I was reading the newspaper in bed – I think it was the *Tribune* – when my eye lit upon an interview with Dr. Lorenz, the famous orthopædic surgeon from Vienna. Twenty years before he had come to America to treat the daughter of Mr. Armour of Chicago who had been crippled from birth. The operation was successful and Dr. Lorenz made a triumphal progress over the United States, operating and lecturing. I believe he returned the following year, enjoying equal *réclame* and financial reward.

Then we heard no more of him until this year of 1922, when he suddenly turned up in New York and was now holding extensive clinics.

The 'story' involved in that interview was startling enough. His wealth had been swept away by the War; privations, anxieties, malnutrition, had induced premature senescence. Misery, increasing poverty, were all he had to look forward to. His practice was gone, and he was physically and mentally unable to recapture it.

For several years past, that great biologist, Dr. Steinach, Director of the Biological Institute in Vienna, had been much discussed in European scientific circles, owing to his successful experiments on rats and guinea pigs, which he had restored to youth and reproductivity. He had then

operated on men with equal success. I had heard of him myself, for a well-known Englishman of sixty-odd had been re-energized by Steinach, and was so enthusiastic that he announced he would take the Albert Hall and tell the world about it. But, alas, he felt so young and energetic that he plunged into the wild life of a young man about town, caught pneumonia, and died. Then came the War and the world in general thought of nothing else.

Dr. Lorenz's friends begged him to undergo the slight operation, but for many years he and Steinach had been deadly enemies and hated each other cordially. (This I heard later; it was not in the interview.) It was long before he could bring himself to owe anything to his rival, but succumbed eventually. It was either that or increasing senescence with all its attendant ills. And, after all, he was not obliged to come into personal contact with Steinach, who no longer operated, himself. He entered the clinic, and the operation was a success.

Dr. Lorenz very wisely made for New York, where money was far more plentiful than in Europe, and the afflicted flocked to his clinic. He had a very definite intention of saying nothing whatever about his previous senescence and its miraculous cure, but the enterprising Associated Press correspondent in Vienna, who happened to be interested in Steinachism, learned the facts and burnt the wires with his 'news.'

Dr. Lorenz was immediately interviewed, and then admitted freely that he had taken advantage of this modern scientific fountain of youth, and, although in his late sixties, had all the energy and endurance of a strong man of forty. He sometimes worked fourteen hours a day, and hardly knew what it was to feel fatigue. With that Father Christmas beard it was impossible for him to look young, but he had rosy cheeks and clear sparkling eyes.

Following this interview was one with Dr. Harry Benjamin

a former associate of Steinach, now a practising physician in New York. The newspaper men with the lightning speed of their kind discovered that Dr. Benjamin had written several papers for medical reviews on the subject.

Dr. Benjamin gave the interview reluctantly, for doctors are not supposed to give interviews. It is one of their funny little 'ethics.' But when the newspaper men threatened to make a rehash of his papers, so technical they barely understood a word, he succumbed rather than have Steinach misrepresented. He not only gave them in simple language the information they demanded, but added that women were running to the Steinach clinic from all over Europe, among them Russian princesses who sold their jewels to pay for treatments – women were not operated upon – that might restore their exhausted energies and enable them to make a living after jewels had given out.

It was this last picturesque item that gave my mind a violent jolt.

Five years before I had been lying awake one night when a sudden vivid picture rose in my mind. It was in a theatre on the opening night of a new play. At the fall of the first curtain a woman, very beautiful, very unusual in appearance, rose, turned her back to the stage, lifted her opera glass and surveyed the house. This is a common occurrence in Europe – I had done it myself – but unheard of in America.

Of course there was an immediate buzz in the audience. Who was this woman? No one had ever seen her before. She looked 'European,' yet subtly American. That she was a woman of the best society no one could doubt. She had the poise, the aloofness, the calm dignity, the air of quiet authority, of one who might have spent her life in the courts of Europe. She was certainly a Somebody. But who? Whence had she come? How could she have escaped the reporters, always on the alert for distinguished guests at the hotels?

Her simple gown was unmistakably Parisian. She looked about thirty.

Well, who *was* she? I didn't know. There was a story behind that graceful arresting mysterious figure, but it refused to unroll. I was very busy with war work at the time, but I made several efforts to start that story going. Nothing developed. After I finished *Sisters-in-law* I tried again. In vain. And again and again. She remained enveloped in mystery.

For five years she stayed planted in that theatre, her back to the curtain, surveying the house, and I couldn't get her out. Of course, I could have written some kind of a story, 'making up as I went along,' but what is a novel without a theme? And theme I had none.

Now, in a flash, I knew I had found one. I looked up Dr. Benjamin's number in the telephone book, and asked him for an appointment. He gave me one for eleven o'clock, and I was at his house in Central Park West on the minute. Dr. Benjamin was a man to inspire immediate confidence, and also – I suppose one cannot be a successful doctor otherwise – extremely likeable. I took to him at once and we have been friends ever since.

He was much interested in my embryonic novel and unfolded the mysteries of Steinachism. Then when I told him of my period of mental sterility, which had lasted for over a year, and of my dissatisfaction with the preceding books, he asked me why I did not consider taking the Steinach treatment. They had about twenty per cent failures, but if I should be one of the unfortunates at least it would do me no harm. If it were a success I need have no further apprehension of sterility. I was always ready for anything new, and made up my mind then and there.

But he never took the risk of treating any one with defective organs, and gave me a thorough examination. He pronounced all my organs in perfect condition and informed me

that I had the arteries of sixteen. What, then, was the matter? Possibly my pituitary and thyroid glands were depleted, and there should be a fresh release of hormones into the blood stream. (I hope I am not doing him an injustice with this unscientific explanation, but that was the gist of it, as nearly as I can remember.)

I took the course of treatments, beginning a day or two later. It consisted of X-Ray stimulation in a laboratory, where he met me three times a week – a painless and rather boring process. I think there were eight treatments in all.

The immediate effects are by no means similar in all cases. As for me, for a month my brain was torpid. I slept sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, I saw no one, for I was too stupid to sustain a conversation, and could barely read a mystery story. When capable of thought I wondered if I were ruined for life. But when Dr. Benjamin laughed at me I ceased to worry. It was far too much effort.

And then, one day – it was about a week after the finish of the treatments – I had the abrupt sensation of a black cloud lifting from my brain, hovering for a moment, rolling away. Torpor vanished. My brain seemed sparkling with light. I was standing in the middle of the room when this miracle happened and I almost flung myself at my desk. I wrote steadily for four hours; marched that woman triumphantly out of the theatre, with a complete knowledge of who she was, what had happened to her, what was going to happen to her; and the hero came to life in the first paragraph. (I made him a Southerner as it was necessary he should be rather romantic – although a columnist! – in order to hasten the action of the story.) It all gushed out like a geyser that had been ‘capped’ down in the cellars of my mind, battling for release.

That geyser never paused in its outpourings until the book was finished, five months later. It comprised some hundred and ten thousand words and I wrote it three times

– once by hand and twice on the typewriter – but at a speed I had never commanded before; seven months was usually the time consumed for a novel of that length. Of course I consulted Dr. Benjamin frequently and he read parts of the manuscript.

## V I I

I CONCLUDED to give the book to Horace Liveright, who had been after me for several years. He was the most scintillating of the younger publishers, very enterprising, with original methods of advertising, and might never have heard the word ‘rut’; more than could be said for the older group, who had had things all their own way far too long.

We could not decide upon a title. I sent him several lists, but he rejected them all as inadequate, and to publishers I have always deferred in the matter of titles, as in anything else of which I feel assured they know more than I do.

One night I was dining with Avery Hopwood when Carl Van Vechten asked me if I had found a title. I shook my head gloomily, and then I suddenly remembered – where do these lighting flashes come from? – three lines of a dramatic poem by W. B. Yeats that had made a deep impression on me when I read them years before in Munich.

‘How would this do? . . . I wonder . . .’ And I recited the lines aloud:

*The years like great black oxen tread the world  
And God the herdsman goads them on behind  
And I am broken by their passing feet.*

‘Great Black Oxen’?

There was an immediate and enthusiastic chorus of approval. A wonderful title. But Black Oxen. Leave off the *great*. I think it was Carl who was the most insistent.

I dispatched it to Mr. Liveright next day, and he, with his canny knowledge of the public, accepted it with equal enthusiasm.

*Black Oxen* had the great and immediate success that I should have liked for *Tower of Ivory*, still my favourite. However, I made no complaint and took the good, the gods provided.

But it had other *sequelæ*, and one was an overwhelming correspondence. Women from all over the English-speaking world wrote to me wanting to know if my book were a fairy-tale or if it were really true they might hope to renew their youthful energies, and as I felt that I had 'started something,' and had no right to disappoint these eager, sometimes desperate, women, I answered all of them.

Poor Dr. Benjamin! I nearly ruined him. Women besieged him, imploring him to give them the treatment free of charge or at a minimum price. It was the first time they had seen a ray of light in a future menaced with utter fatigue and the clutching of younger hands at the jobs that were wearing them out. He was too kind and conscientious to deny the most appealing cases, and they must have taken a good deal of his valuable time and left him out of pocket, for someone had to pay the laboratory expenses. But he was rewarded, for his fame spread.

I met several of those patients with whom the treatment had been as successful as with me. I also had enthusiastic letters from others who, living abroad, had gone to Steinach's clinic or to Dr. Schmidt in Berlin.

But, of course, anything so radical was bound to meet with disapproval in a country which dismisses professors for teaching the doctrine of evolution. The world, and the great and free United States in particular, is full of narrow-minded, ignorant, moronic, bigoted, cowardly, self-righteous, anæmic, pig-headed, stupid, puritanical, hypocritical, prejudiced, fanatical, cocoa-blooded atavists, who soothe

their inferiority complex by barking their hatred of anything new. The very word Science is abhorrent to them, and, if they ruled the world, progress would cease.

Steinach had suffered from this tribe in Europe. As long as he confined his experiments to rats and guinea pigs, and was unknown save as a distinguished biologist, he was an admirable and original scientist, but when he restored vital energies to human beings, and became famous overnight, he not only aroused the jealousy of his confrères – and doctors are as jealous as opera singers – but clergymen thundered that to interfere with the processes of nature was an insult to Almighty God, and saw to it that he was denied the Nobel Prize. If he had condescended to answer he might have asked why did these righteous men call in a doctor when they were ill, take tonics for failing energies, have old teeth replaced with new, put delicate babies in incubators, favour operations for cancer, and palliatives for the diseases of old age? All of which might be regarded as interfering with natural processes and the will of Almighty God. A doctor is always fighting these ‘natural processes,’ even to keeping aged patients alive far beyond the Biblical span, and frowned upon when he fails too often.

I believe I was also denounced from the pulpit, and certain club women, who regarded anything beyond their limited comprehension as immoral, banded together in an endeavour to stop the sale of the book before it should have contaminated the virtuous American public.

A long while ago an eager group of reformers wrote to me asking if I could suggest anything that would improve the morals of the American people. I replied that the trouble with the American people in general was not lack of morals but lack of brains, and I was reminded of this incident by the intemperate wrath directed against *Black Oxen*. However, they were unsuccessful in their attempts to destroy the book, and it also made one of the best pictures of its time –



carefully adapted to avoid offending the most squeamish sensibilities!

Moreover – since *Black Oxen* was written in 1922, five novels have succeeded one another rapidly. That renewed mental vitality and neural energy have never been affected save by that brief staleness which afflicts all writers. For this, besides rest, there are two methods of renewal – to be, in fact, recommended to any one about to begin a long novel that makes an inexorable demand upon vitality: the High-frequency treatment of the pituitary gland described in *The Sophisticates*, and a visit to a chiropractor, who cracks one up and releases the flow of energy to the brain. Both are immediately effective unless one is in need of the Steinach treatment. We live in an age of scientific marvels, and those who do not take advantage of them are fools and deserve the worst that malignant Nature can inflict upon them.

### V I I I

I WENT to Europe in the spring of 1925, possessed with the idea that I should find a novel in Geneva, headquarters of the League of Nations. The Assembly would not be in session before September, and I travelled meanwhile and spent a month of the summer in Monte Carlo – a very pleasant place to rest during the summer, for, if hot, it is by no means deserted like other towns on the Riviera, which look dusty and unkempt and not unlike evacuated towns in the War zone. The streets of ‘Monte’ looked as if they had been swept every morning and the leaves of the trees burnished by hand.

I had brought a letter to Mrs. James Brown Potter, in her day the most beautiful woman on the American stage. When Muriel and I reached her villa on the hill we found her still beautiful, with her shingled white hair, burning black eyes and slender willowy figure.

But she struck me during that first meeting as decidedly peculiar. When I entered the dim *salon* she started back, gave me a piercing glance, and during a call of some twenty minutes she barely spoke but sat staring at me until I wondered uneasily if I had applied my lipstick to the wrong spot or if the rough drive had displaced my hat.

A few days later Lily Langtry (Lady de Bathe) gave us a tea, and there Mrs. Potter was vivacious and friendly. Langtry, by the way, was the most remarkable-looking woman for her age I had ever seen. She told me that she was seventy-two and had never lost a tooth! Whether her hair was grey or not it was impossible to tell, as it was covered by a hat, but her skin was unwrinkled save on the eyelids, and although her beauty had gone she was still a handsome woman with a fine upstanding figure, and looked as if she could walk from Monte Carlo to Paris. I was shocked to hear of her death a year later, but pneumonia can be fatal at any age.

She had a number of beaux; several of them, foreigners of title, had been invited to the tea and there was no doubt of their devotion. She may have lost her beauty and allure but she was a good fellow, mixed cocktails for them, and was witty and amusing. She certainly had lost nothing of her old vivacity and good-nature, and we were equally charmed with her.

In the course of the week we invited her and Mrs. Potter to tea at the Hotel de Paris. As we were walking up the hill afterward, Mrs. Potter touched my arm. 'Will you fall behind?' she asked. 'I have something to say to you.'

'It is this,' she continued when we were beyond earshot. 'You know . . . I suppose you thought I acted strangely when you called the other day. But, you see, I am a mystic. I sat at the feet of a Mahatma in India and have studied ever since. . . .'

She paused and I wondered what was coming. Her eyes

had a curious, intent, and what is known as a far-away expression. She went on after a moment.

"The minute you entered the room I knew you were some great woman out of the past . . . But I couldn't place you. . . . It worried me . . . I couldn't talk . . . After you left I could think of nothing else. When I went to bed I couldn't sleep. Who was she? Who was she? I kept saying to myself. I'll never sleep until I know. And then suddenly it came to me. I sat up in bed and exclaimed aloud: "*She was Aspasia!*" And she paused dramatically.

I was flattered but replied quite truthfully: "That is very interesting, and I wish I could believe it. But, you see, I am so constituted that I believe in nothing incapable of proof. And reincarnation has hardly. . . ."

But she interrupted me almost angrily. "Oh, but you *must* believe it! I know what I am talking about. You *were* Aspasia. I possess some of the great secrets, and I cannot be mistaken. What is more you were Ninon de l'Enclos in a subsequent incarnation. . . ."

"Oh, come!" I said. "One is enough! It is odd that you should have hit upon two women who once had a compelling interest for me, although it is years since I have thought of either. But if I cannot agree with you – much as I should like to! – at least I am grateful to you for giving me an idea. I'll write a life of Aspasia. Why I have never thought of it before I cannot imagine, for there was a time when I thought and speculated a good deal about Aspasia and Pericles . . . And as for ancient Greece – I read the plays of Æschylus, Sophocles, Euripides and Aristophanes over every year . . . Odd . . . Why, I wonder, have I never thought of it before?"

I was growing excited, but it was evident that Mrs. Potter was disappointed. Rather a flat sequel to her astounding discovery! A book! Well, at all events, while I was writing it I would learn the truth for myself.

The idea of writing a life of Pericles and Aspasia took such firm hold on me that I lost all interest in the Geneva novel, but as I was warned not to go to Athens before October on account of the heat, I concluded to take the Assembly in my stride. There might be something in it, and if so I could return to it later.

Muriel and the rest of the party – her youngest girl, Dominga, and her young cousin, Inez Macondray – went to Italy, and I to Lausanne to wait for September and read up for the Greek book. I wrote to my English publisher, Sir John Murray, asking him to send me all the lives of Pericles and Aspasia he could find, and in Lausanne I found several works on ancient Greece. I read them with avidity, for not only was I frantically interested, but a place when you visit it has little to say to you unless you know something of its history, and my memories of what I had read of Greece in the past were extremely hazy.

I had intended to spend the month of September in Geneva, but remained there for ten days only. I could not get into any of the hotels, where even the bath-tubs had been turned into beds, and was obliged to go to a *pension*, where I nearly froze to death. No hotel nor *pension* manager in Europe will turn on the heat before the middle of October, no matter how inclement the weather, and although I had taken letters and dined and lunched out every day I spent the intervening time in bed with a hot water bag! And anything duller or more unenlightening than those Assembly speeches by eminent statesmen is not to be imagined. I shook the dust of Geneva from my feet and returned to my comfortable hotel in Lausanne (where I could warm my room by filling the bath-tub with hot water), leaving the Great League of Nations novel to be written by some one insensitive to cold and boredom.

## I X

THE most interesting hotel in Athens is the Grande Bretagne, for all the world passes through it and it is situated on the great square, the Place de la Constitution. But there was no room vacant and I was sent up into the residence district to the Petit Palais, a smaller hotel under the same management as the Grande Bretagne, and the former palace of Prince Nicolas, now in exile. It was luxurious but dull, almost empty in fact, but at least I could get a room with a bath; a rarity in Athens, where water is scarcer than an honest politician. Prince Nicolas had tapped the aqueduct – conceived by Hadrian! – and if my bath was dark brown it was better than nothing and lapped me in the classic waters of Phaleron. The drinking water came from springs in the hills and in this I washed my face.

I wandered about Athens rather aimlessly for several days. It is an ugly city and as crowded and bustling as Chicago, swarming at this time with repatriated Greeks who had been exchanged after the late war for thousands of Turks who had spent a lifetime in Greece. The palace built for Otho of Bavaria, when he had been appointed King by the Powers, looked like a barrack and was now the headquarters of the Near East Relief Association, financed by American dollars. The only fine buildings in Athens are the University, Library, and Academy, that stand in line, and, built in the classical manner, are beautiful enough to atone for the commonplaceness of the rest of the city. Even the 'palace' in which I lived was nothing but a large house of thirty-two rooms, and no more architectual than the other large houses on that wide street, once the centre of fashion. This street, by the way, was lined with pepper trees which made me feel quite at home, but were the cause of a ludicrous mistake. In the first fruit of this visit, *The Immortal Marriage*, I planted pepper trees about Pericles'

country house and described their lace-like effect against a temple in Athens. It never occurred to me they were not indigenous; moreover, while I was writing the book in San Francisco, some one told me that the pepper tree had been brought to California in early days by Greek traders. But after the book came out, Mrs. Older insisted that our pepper trees had come from South America, which had also exported them to Southern Europe. Consternation! I wrote at once to an Athenian lady, Mrs. Dragoumis, with whom I was in correspondence, begging her to reassure me. But alas! She answered that the pepper had arrived in Greece about 1820, and was known as 'the American tree.' Pepper trees had to be uprooted and fig trees substituted, which meant the remaking of two plates in *The Immortal Marriage*.

I had brought letters from acquaintances in Geneva, but all to whom they were addressed were travelling; it was too early to return to the winter gaieties of Athens. But Mr. Howland, who had the direction of the United States Government loan to Greece, introduced me to Professor Œconemon, head of the School of Mines, and a conversation with him changed my whole plan of attack.

I had accepted without question the 'historic fact' that Aspasia was a *hetæra*, one of those beautiful and brilliant women of ancient Athens who fitted themselves intellectually to be 'companions' of her great men, and went from one to another as fancy dictated. Aspasia stood out in history, not only because of her superior attainments and her great gift for dialectics, but because of her long fidelity to Pericles. Sir John Murray had been unable to find any life of Aspasia, but in those of Pericles he sent me she was always the '*hetæra*' who had enthralled the greatest statesman of ancient times. And certainly Plutarch didn't mince his words, nor Aristophanes.

But when, in conversation with Professor Œconemon, I alluded casually to Aspasia as a *hetæra*, he looked almost

angry. 'Aspasia was not a *hetæra*!' he exclaimed. 'She was what to-day would be called a morganatic wife. A perfectly respectable if somewhat unfortunate position.'

I stared at him. 'But – but –' I faltered. 'Surely . . . For two thousand years she has been known as a *hetæra*, the most famous in history.'

'You have not read the German scholars,' he said. 'They have learned better, and successfully refuted that old scandal. Read Adolf Schmidt's *Pericles and Aspasia*. He gives twenty-seven reasons why Aspasia could not have been a *hetæra*.'

'Then why,' I demanded, 'has she been called one for twenty-four centuries?'

'It all dates from the Comic Poets, Aristophanes in particular. They hated Pericles and sought to hurt him through the woman to whom he was devoted. Moreover, they resented the fact that any woman should have the mind of a man, and hold her own even with Socrates. You must bear in mind that after the glory of Greece had departed she was forgotten until the renewal of interest in Hellenism by the Romans in the third and second centuries B.C. Interest in the great dramatic poets, the historians, Plato, Xenophon, and all the personalities of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. But regarding Aspasia they were content to accept the estimate of the Comic Poets, probably because it was more spicy, and disregarding Plato and Xenophon, who held her in the highest esteem. Scholars, including historians, seem to have done no thinking for themselves until the Germans engaged in original research. To-day no one who follows modern thought and research accepts anything but their estimate.'

I was very much disconcerted. I *wanted* Aspasia to be a *hetæra*. Never having written about a courtesan, for those of my own day were anything but inspiring, I had welcomed it as something new in psychology alone; and who could

fail to make a loose and intellectual lady of the Golden Age of Pericles interesting?

Professor Econemon shook his head when I grumbled at my thwarted ambition. 'You cannot afford to ignore those Germans,' he said. 'The German scholars are the most thorough in the world. We do not think of questioning them. If you do ignore them your book will be old-fashioned and valueless.'

That clinched it. I turned a mental double back somersault. I wanted my book to be accurate history quite as much as an interesting presentment of those greatest lovers of all time.

I thanked Professor Econemon and returned to my room in the Petit Palais to fight mosquitoes and meditate.

I was soon reconciled. After all, Aspasia was Aspasia and Pericles was Pericles. Even a somewhat regulated union could not deprive their long love affair of interest.

By this time I had made up my mind not to write a 'Life' but a biographical novel. I was, first and last, a novelist, and would have no such scope in another medium. I had invented the form in *The Conqueror*, and might as well follow it up as I had done in *Rezánov*. I cherish the belief that all straight biographers would write the biographical novel if they possessed the necessary gift, and certainly the new group have applied some of the methods of fiction to their Lives of famous men and women of the past.

## X

I HATE ruins. The Acropolis filled me with melancholy when I remembered that the Parthenon, the Temple of Niké, the Erechtheum, and the superb Propylea had made the Acropolis the wonder of the world in its time. The Theseum is in a better state of preservation, but looks worm-eaten, and



of course its pediments have long since disappeared. All ruins should be restored; to leave them as they are, the helpless victims of time and war, is not only a wanton cruelty to themselves, but encourages a decadent taste. And few have imagination enough to see them in all their former glory.

But I saw a wonderful sunset from the Acropolis. The lofty island of Ægina looked like a flaming chariot against the red west, and even ugly modern Athens was almost beautiful in that swimming rosy glow. The Bay of Phaleron was a deep rich purple. I also saw the Acropolis by moonlight, but although the silver beams etherialized those tragic ruins they were haunted by too many ghosts for me and I cursed the Venetians and Turks who had shattered them.

Several days after my arrival I engaged the services of a dragoman – very necessary in Athens, where the crooked winding streets are labelled in Greek. Even in the great Museum there is no other language employed, and an interpreter is indispensable for the first visit at least.

My dragoman, an intelligent man, after conducting me through several miles of pottery, revived my enthusiasm. He obtained permission to show me something as yet beheld by no tourist and few Athenians. Some months before, the bronze statue of a boy had been hauled out of the Bay of Marathon in a fisherman's net. It was estimated that it was the work of a sculptor of the fifth or fourth century B.C. and had been lost in a shipwreck. The youth was almost obliterated, however, by the encrustations of over two thousand years and it was impossible more than to guess at his period until he was restored to something like his original condition.

I was conducted into the room where he lay in his acid bath. A graceful boyish little figure despite the maltreatments of time. He was almost clean now and looked the sleeping effigy of a youth who might have inspired his

sculptor no longer ago than yesterday. It was difficult to believe he was so incredibly old.

Age! Age! You have only to leave the swarming streets of Athens with their screeching automobiles and Standard Oil signs to feel age and decay pressing upon you at all sides. Mutterings of a Past that Time has deprived of all its beauty. Even the mountains of Attica look too old to stand upright and as if the next earthquake would crumble them to dust.

Only the waters of Greece defy the inexorable march of the centuries. They could have been no more beautiful, no more exquisitely coloured, in the Golden Age of Pericles than they are to-day. Phaleron. Salamis. The Ægean. Corinth. When driving along the shore it was possible to forget the stark worn-out landscape, criminally deforested – redeemed only by the silvery olive groves – the mean little towns. The Gulf of Corinth is even a deeper sapphire than the Caribbean Sea.

My disappointments, very naturally, were coloured by the vivid mental pictures I had invoked during my intensive reading of the last two months, but on the other hand if I had not taken a life-long love of Greece and sufficient knowledge of its history with me to re-create the past, the country would have said nothing to me at all, and I should have shared the vague dissatisfactions of the average tourist. But it is stupid to visit any country without some knowledge of its history.

Of course I wanted to see the Pnyx, where Pericles, Alcibiades, Demosthenes, all the great of those two centuries, had addressed the assembled citizens of Athens in the Ecclesia. My dragoman pointed it out to me from the road, but I wanted to stand on it, on the very spot so often trod by Pericles. Guides dislike visitors who demand anything beyond the ordinary curriculum, and I am sure that this military dictatorial person who had served in five wars

hated me. There were many objects of interest, notably those reminiscent of Byzantium and Hadrian, that tourists lingered before as a matter of course, and went away quite convinced they had seen all of Athens that was good for them. Why should I set myself up to be different? Why did I scorn poor old Hadrian? And no one had ever wanted to go up on to the Pnyx before, that barren dusty rock. The trouble was that I knew, thanks to my recent cramming, far more of the history of Athens than he did, and as he was a fine specimen of the dominant male it irritated him.

I told him that if he did not take me up on to the Pnyx I would engage another dragoman, and as I was probably the only tourist in Athens and was paying him five dollars a day, he succumbed, shrugged his military shoulders, and gave orders to the chauffeur. We made a wide *détour*, climbed a dirt road, and then were obliged to get out and walk. We picked our way through a malodorous farmyard, through a filthy chicken run, and then climbed a fence! But I stood on the Pnyx at last and faced the Bema, trying to see Pericles, wrapped in his white mantle, addressing the men of Athens standing or squatting before him. But with my dragoman anxiously examining his trousers and muttering imprecations, and with motor-horns squawking in the road below, I found it impossible to see anything but a broken little rostrum; and it was not until I was writing the book in San Francisco that the past became alive. Now there was nothing of the fifth century B.C. but the vivid blue sky and air so light and buoyant that the feet felt winged.

I received a letter from Mrs. Potter while I was in Athens. She was now much interested in my book and wished me all success. That would be assured if I would obey her instructions. I must lie flat on the bed, close my eyes, relax, make my mind a blank. When the latter feat was accomplished the past would flow through my receptive mind, with Aspasia – myself! – as the central figure.

Like *Jurgen* I am always willing to try anything once, and obeyed her instructions. I did manage to relax and make my mind a blank, but alas, the day was very hot and I fell asleep! Nor did I even dream of Athens or Aspasia.

I remained but two weeks in Greece, for I feared to acquire an indelible picture of modern Athens. In my time it had but twenty thousand inhabitants and now it had nine hundred thousand! And there was never a moment of quiet. The automobile drivers were obliged by law to sound their horns incessantly, as the residents had the habit of holding long conversations in the middle of the street. And I had had enough of dark-brown baths and mosquitoes.

I had come to Athens by boat from Trieste, but returned by train, and as it progressed north, leaving Attica and Boeotia behind, the landscape changed. In Thessaly there were green fields. The mountains were thickly covered with pine forests. But even here the mountains, when one glimpsed the rocky soil between the trees, had that same crumbling *aged* look. Terrific convulsions have rent Greece. The many islands that surround it were once part of the mainland, shaken loose by mighty earthquakes, seismic changes lost in the mists of the past. One has the haunting impression that it is the oldest country in the world, old, perhaps, before cave-man history began.

## X I

I REMAINED for four months in New York, reading at the Public Library and the Metropolitan Museum. I had managed to buy about a hundred and ten books in Lausanne, Athens, Paris, and New York, besides those sent me by Sir John Murray, but many were not to be bought at any price. My old friend Mr. Parker, who had given me such valuable help with *The Conqueror*, and who was still in

charge of the Mechanics, Library, unearthed a dozen musty old volumes, and these I could take home; a great relief, for I dislike taking notes in Public Libraries. An emanation of death and decay seems to come from those thousands of old books, many of them bound in aged calf slowly rotting, and makes me feel as if I were in a mortuary, airless and stifling. When I returned to San Francisco I found its Public Library and Mechanics' Library almost as well supplied. In all I must have read nearly two hundred volumes dealing with the fifth century B.C. Among the books I had bought was the Jowett translation of my old friend Plato, which would almost have been enough in itself.

I had taken an apartment in San Francisco two or three years since, and written one book in it, *The Crystal Cup*. In order to destroy the atmosphere of that excessively modern novel and create another, I hung the walls of my work-room with large photographs of the temples, statues, and vases of ancient Greece, which I had bought at the Metropolitan Museum. No ruins. The museum has an exquisite replica in miniature of the Parthenon as it came from the hands of Phidias, Ictinus, and Callicrates. Of this I had three different aspects as well as an interior.

This attempt to create an objective atmosphere may be unnecessary; no doubt some will say it should be, but at all events it adds to the pleasure of the work; so why cavil?

By this time I was so soaked and saturated in ancient Greece, that, during the long hours at my desk in that room, the Athens of Aspasia and Pericles was far more real to me than the modern world surrounding me, and even Mrs. Potter would have admitted there was no need to go into a trance to invoke the realities of the fifth century B.C. Modern Athens, as I immediately discovered, was obliterated, and I lived in those ancient streets and dwellings, dawdled in the *aulas* with the secluded women, listened to the sonorous voices of the men in the Agora – eternally

talking! – heard the owls hoot at night, tasted the resin in the wine, wandered through the temples with their coloured statues of gods, goddesses, and eminent citizens, knew every gesture of Pericles, Aspasia, Socrates, the young Alcibiades, Phidias – and minor characters I was obliged to invent but who were equally alive to me. I never deluded myself that I ‘was Aspasia,’ but I certainly was convinced that I *had lived there*. Else, why should it seem so real, press so closely about me? . . . Unless. . . .

May it not be possible that a phantasm of all civilizations of the past has been translated to some plane high in space, their wraith-like inhabitants living, moving, going through all the old gestures, as eternal as space itself? And that, magnetized, they flow through certain minds bent upon recreating them? We know that no sound is lost, that somewhere out in the ether are the echoing voices of the Cro-Magnon and the Neanderthal man, the crashing and rending of the ice ages, the battle cries of Cæsar’s armies, the impact of the battering ram on the mighty walls of forgotten cities. Why should ‘history’ be a mere matter of the printed page? We have witnessed so many wonders of science in our own brief time, may it not be that a super-Edison will one day make that past visible, and we shall see – and possibly hear – Socrates firing questions at the helpless he has button-holed in the market place, see Napoleon standing with his arms folded, looking down upon Waterloo?

But it might have dire results! Now we indulge in the pleasures of imagination, and without the exercise of that one divine faculty we possess, life would hardly be worth living. When it is atrophied through disuse, if science saves us all effort, we may curse the day we were born – and there will be no more demand for historical novelists! The cinema has taken the place of reading with a certain public, soon the concert halls will be deserted,\*so much more comfortable

is it to sit at home and listen to music 'over the air.' Who, if this last miracle comes to pass, will read history or biography, no matter how fascinatingly treated with the methods of fiction, when he may lie back in a verandah chair, lift a glass with a magic lens, and see the whole show for himself?

Alas! Alas! Life gives with one hand and takes with the other. But meanwhile there is much joy in being a biographical novelist, and never have I been so completely happy as when writing *The Immortal Marriage*, and *The Jealous Gods* (*Vengeful Gods* in England) that succeeded it.

# INDEX

- ABBEY, EDWIN AUSTIN**, 174, 361  
**Abruzzi, Duc d'**, 472  
**Academy**, 261, 378  
**Adamses, the**, 87  
**Adie, Miss**, school-teacher, 44  
**Adrienne Lecouvreur**, 406  
**Æschylus**, 546  
**Agassiz, Louis**, 64  
**Aida, Verdi's**, 50, 457  
**Aiken, Ednah**, 534  
**Alaska**, 406  
**Alba, Duc d'** 533  
**Albert, Prince**, 371  
**Alcibiades**, 553  
**Alden, Henry Mills**, 218  
**Aleman, Archbishop**, 73, 74, 91  
**Alexander, Mrs.**, novelist, 247  
**Alexander, Mrs. Charles**, 510, 520  
**Alexandra, Queen of England**, 228, 340  
**Allen, Mrs. Frederick**, 492  
**Allen, James Lane**, 217  
**Alma-Tadema, Sir Laurens**, 174  
**Ambassadors, The**, Henry James, 363  
**American Commonwealth**, Bryce, 301  
**American Historical Association**, 308  
**American War Relief Clearing House**, 505  
**American Wives and English Hus- bands**, Gertrude Atherton, 275, 287, 304  
**Ames, Captain**, 383, 392  
**Ancestors**, Gertrude Atherton, 379, 393, 407  
**Andigné, Marquis d'**, 508  
**Andigné, Marquise d'**, 497, 498, 505  
**Anglin, Margaret**, 520  
**Anglo-Saxon Review**, 306, 364  
**Anspacher, Louis**, 520  
**Argonaut, The**, 90, 99, 100, 148, 149, 382  
**Argüello, Concepcion**, 199  
**Argüello, Louis**, 63  
**Aristocrats, The**, Gertrude Atherton, 308, 330, 368  
**Aristophanes**, 546, 550  
**Arlington Hotel, Santa Barbara**, 197  
**Ashlands estate**, 50  
**Ashmead-Bartlett-Burdett-Coutts, William**, 369  
**Aspasia**, 546  
**Asquith, Henry**, 387, 388  
**Astor, Lady**, 456  
**Astor, Mrs.**, 138, 147, 151  
**As We Were**, E. F. Benson, 371  
**Athens**, 548  
**Atherton, Alejandra** (*see* Rathbone, Mrs. Lawrence)  
**Atherton, Captain**, 442  
**Atherton, California**, 63, 99  
**Atherton, Elena** (*see* Selby, Mrs. Percy)  
**Atherton, Faxon**, 63, 70, 75, 79, 188  
**Atherton, Mrs. Faxon**, 79, 127, 188  
**Atherton, Faxon Dean**, 63, 70, 75, 78, 79  
**Atherton, Mrs. Faxon Dean**, 63, 65, 71, 73, 79, 82, 85, 88, 111, 114, 117, 186, 201, 209, 221  
**Atherton, Florence** (*see* Eyre, Mrs. Edward)  
**Atherton, Frank**, 65, 75, 79  
**Atherton, George**, 75, 87, 90, 93, 105, 110  
**Atherton, George Goffi**, 53, 55, 57, 64, 65, 67, 77, 79, 80, 93, 95, 99, 109, 111, 127, 128, 224  
**Atherton, Gertrude**, *passim*  
**Atherton, Isabel**, 64  
**Atherton, Muriel**, 88, 91, 93, 99, 108, 119, 129, 131, 135, 188, 225, 354, 393, 396, 401, 406, 467, 488, 521, 524, 544  
**Atherton, Mrs.** (London society woman), 442  
**Atlantic Monthly**, 147  
**Aurora Leigh**, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, 246  
**Austin, Mary**, 520  
**Austria**, 343  
**Author**, 264  
**Authors' League, United States**, 520  
**Avglanche, The**, Gertrude Atherton, 512, *note*



Ayers, Mary, 408, 429

*Bad Child's Book of Beasts, The,*

Hilaire Belloc, 292

Baden-Powell, Sir Robert, 384

Bagby, Albert M., 520

Baldwin, Admiral, 43

Baldwin, Florence, 43

Balfour, Arthur, 367, 368

Balli, Madame, 493

Barbados, 342

Bar-le-Duc, France, 501

Barnes, W. H. L., 121

Barreda, Mattie, 137, 138

Barreda, Mrs., 137, 140

Barreda, Rosa, 117, 121, 137, 212

Barrie, Sir James, 230

Barrons, the, 100

Bayreuth, 420

Beach, C., 101

Beach, Rex, 520

Beale, Marie, 523

Beale, Truxtun, 523

Beardsley, Aubrey, 230, 244, 257, 304

Beatty, H. C., 505

Beaver, Ethel, 38

Beck, James, 520

Beerbohm, Max, 230, 300, 304

*Before the Gringo Came,* Gertrude Atherton, 378

Belasco, David, 190

Belford, Clark & Company, 141, 142, 148, 185

Belgium, 488

Bell, Moberly, 259

*Bell in the Fog, The,* Gertrude Atherton, 365, 377

Belloc, Hilaire, 213, 242, 292

Belloc, Mrs. Hilaire, 214, 242, 292

Belmont, Mrs. August, 510

Belmont, California, 51

Belvedere, Island of, 396, 398

Bender, opera singer, 351

Bendon, Dorothe, 534

Benicia, California, 40, 42

Benjamin, Dr. Harry, 537

Bennett, Arnold, 446

Bennett, James Gordon, 153

Benson, E. F., 230, 371

Beresford, Lady William, 228

Berkeley, California, 394, 406

Bernhardt, Sarah, 352, 406

Bernstorff, Count, 361

Bernstorff, Countess, 361, 362

Besant, Sir Walter, 245, 263

Bien-Etre des Blessés, Le, 497, 505, 509

Bierce, Ambrose, 201, 213, 220, 222, 226

'Big House', Menlo Park, 68, 79, 85, 109, 114

Billy, de, 520

Black Bull Inn, Haworth, 234, 237

*Black Oxen,* Gertrude Atherton, 542, 543

Blackwood, Lord Basil, 292

*Blackwood's Magazine,* 218

Blaine, James G., 524

Blake, Mrs. school teacher, 29

Blanding, Edith, 90

Blanding, Lena, 90

*Bleak House,* Dickens, 44

Bliss, Mrs., 492

Blood, Colonel, 281

Blood, Mrs., 276

Blood, Vera (*see* Campbell, Lady Colin)

Bodley Head, 231, 304

Boer War, 289, 297, 306

Bogle, Miss, 259, 289, 290

Bohemian Club, San Francisco, 177

Bolsheviki, 516

Boldini, artist, 282

Bolton Abbey, Yorkshire, 239, 269

Bonsecours, France, 269

*Bookman,* London, 230, 287

Bosetti, opera singer, 351, 457

Boulogne, 165, 167

'Boy of Egremont, The,' Wordsworth, 240

Braddon, Miss, novelist, 247

Brander, Governor, 131

Brett, Mr., editor, 335, 337

Brevoort House, San Francisco, 139

*British Weekly,* 230, 287

Brontë, Branwell, 237

Brontë, Charlotte, 170, 233

Brontë, Emily, 233

Brooklyn Hotel, San Francisco, 28

Brown, Wilton, 483

Brown, Mrs. Wilton, 483

- Brownings, the, 246  
 Bruges, 300, 303  
*Bruges-la-Morte*, 300  
 Brune, Adèle, 408  
 Brunner, Arnold, 520  
 Brunner, Mrs. Arnold, 520  
 Brussels, 306  
 Bryan, William Jennings, 488  
 Bryant, William Cullen, 56  
 Bryce, James, 301, 313, 355  
 Bryce, Mrs., 355  
 Bryn Mawr, 317  
 Buccleugh, Duchess of, 297  
 Buchanan, Thompson, 526  
 Budapest, 343, 345  
*Budget, Boston*, 336  
 Bugg, James (*see* Howard, Norfolk)  
 Bullock, Frank, 46, 49  
 Bullock, Mrs. Robert, 45, 46, 50  
 Bullock, Major Robert, 45, 49  
 Bullock, Sarah, 46  
 Bullock, Tom, 46, 49  
 Bunner, Henry Cuyler, 78, 148  
 Burdett-Coutts, Baroness, 370, 445  
 Burgess, Gelett, 520  
 Burgoyne, Jessie, 148  
 Burgoyne, the, 143  
 Burke, Edmund, 101, 301  
 Burne-Jones, Sir Edward, 174, 178, 281, 290, 387, 519  
 Burne-Jones, Sir Philip, 367  
 Burnett, Frances Hodgson, 217, 520  
 Burnham, architect, 402  
 Burns William, 436  
 Burr, Aaron, 333  
 Bushey, Hertfordshire, 260, 288  
 Butler, Ellis Parker, 520  
 Butler, Nicholas Murray, 486  
 Butler, Mrs. Nicholas Murray, 486, 521  
 Butte, Montana, 467, 475  
 Byron, George Gordon, Lord, 56, 241, 370  
 CAINE, HALL, 230  
 Caird, Mona, 170, 171, 259  
 Calhoun, Patrick, 436  
 California, 186, 365, 485, 528 (*see also* individual places in)  
 California, Bank of, 13, 51  
*California: An Intimate History*, Gertrude Atherton, 435  
*Californians, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 261, 264, 275, 287  
 Calistoga, California, 21  
 Calvé, Emma, 225  
 Camden, New Jersey, 220  
 Cameline liquid powder, 41  
 Campbell, Lord Colin, 276, 284  
 Campbell, Lady Colin, 275, 277  
 Campbell, Mrs. Patrick, 230, 387  
 Campbell-Bannerman, Sir Henry, 367  
 Campbell-Bannerman, Lady, 367  
 Canterbury, England, 232  
 Cape Town, 442  
 Caribbean Sea, 312, 322  
 Carnot, Madame, 495  
 Carolan, Frank, 436  
 Carolan, Mrs. Frank, 436, 520  
 Carpenter, William, 521  
 Carpenter, Mrs. William, 486, 521  
 Carroll, Mrs., 492  
 Carter, Mrs. Ridgley, 492  
 Caruso, 401  
 Casa Grande, Santa Barbara, 198  
 Casserley, Gus, 117  
 Casserley, Jack, 117  
 Castle, Agnes, 87, 230, 374  
 Castle, Egerton, 87, 230, 374  
 Castro, Doña Modeste, 193  
 Castro, Estéban, 195  
 Castro, General, 189, 193  
 Castro, Mexican squatter, 82, 83, 87  
 Castro, son of General Castro, 194  
 Cavendish - Bentinck, Frederick, 455  
 Cavendish-Bentinck, Mrs. Frederick, 453, 455, 468  
 Célestine, maid, 268  
 Central Pacific Railroad, 55  
*Century Magazine*, 147, 211  
 Cerrinis, the, 363, 457  
*Cerritos, Los*, Gertrude Atherton, 169, 185  
 Châlons-sur-Marne, France, 501  
 Chamberlain, Joseph, 360  
 Chamberlain, Mrs. Joseph, 228  
 Chamberlain, S. S., 201, 209, 221  
 Charles I, King of England, 293

- Charles II, King of England, 389  
 Charleston (S.C.), earthquake, 121  
 Charles Town, Nevis Island, 312  
 Charlotte Amalie, St. Thomas, 326,  
     327  
 Charteris, writer, 377  
 Chaucer, 56  
 Chicago, 262  
*Childe Harold*, Byron, 56  
 Childs, Mrs., 195  
 Chile, 68, 127, 186  
 Chisholm, Hugh, 448  
 Christian, King of Denmark, 340  
 Christian Science, 462  
 Christiansted, St. Croix, 323  
 Churchill, Lord Randolph, 380  
 Churchill, Lady Randolph, 228, 306,  
     380  
 Churchill, Winston, 380, 392, 437  
*Citizen of the World*, Goldsmith, 107  
 City Female Seminary, The, 34  
 Claire, Ina, 520  
 Clark, Mr., 484  
 Clarke Institute (see City Female  
     Seminary, The)  
 Clay, Henry, 49  
 Cleveland, Duchess of, 389  
 Cleveland, Grover, 228, 522  
 Cobb, Irvin S., 47, 520  
 Cobb, Mrs. Irvin S., 520  
 Cobden-Sanderson, Mr., 379  
 Cobden-Sanderson, Mrs., 379  
 'Cobina' (see Johnson, Mrs. Owen)  
 Collins, Wilkie, 260  
 Columbia University, 486  
*Commercial Advertiser*, New York,  
     337  
*Confessions of a Young Man*, George  
     Moore, 163  
*Conqueror, The*, Gertrude Atherton,  
     57, 334, 335, 339, 342, 356, 357,  
     360, 377, 404, 448, 515, 551  
*Conquest of Doña Jacoba, The*, Ger-  
     trude Atherton, 193  
*Conquest of Granada, The*, Washing-  
     ton Irving, 36, 37  
 Conrad, Joseph, 452  
 Cooper, Dr., 410  
 Copenhagen, 339  
 Corelli, Marie, 230, 244  
 Corkran, Alice, 245, 376  
 Corkran, Henriette, 181, 245, 376  
 Corkran, Mrs., 247  
 Cornwallis-West, Sheila, 258, 442  
 Coué, Emile, 508  
 Courtney, W. L., 230, 261  
 Coutant, Dr., 334  
 Craig, Boradil, 402, 421, 430  
 Craig, John, 186, 201, 218  
 Craig, Mrs. John, 28, 30, 31, 120,  
     186, 201, 206, 396, 402, 421  
 Craigie, Pearl, (see Hobbess, John  
     Oliver)  
 Crawford, Marion, 222  
 Crewe, Lord, 238  
 'Crinkle, Nyn.', 150  
*Criterion, The*, 378  
*Critic*, New York, 118, 226, 337  
 Crocker, Charles, 55  
 Crocker, Ethel, 496  
 Crocker, Hattie (see Alexander, Mrs.  
     Charles)  
 Crocker, William, 212, 496  
 Crocker, Mrs. William, 212  
*Crystal Cup, The*, Gertrude Ather-  
     ton, 412, 556  
 Cunard, Lady, 230  
*Current Literature*, 148  
 Curzon, Lady, 228, 258  
 Cynara, Ernest Dowson, 251, 254  
  
 DAGMAR, DOWAGER-TSARINA, of  
     Russia, 340  
*Daily Telegraph*, London, 230, 261,  
     289  
 Dana, Richard Henry, 197  
 Danube, River, 344  
 Daudet, Alphonse, 101  
*Daughter of an Empress, The*, Louisa  
     Mühlbach, 27  
*Daughter of the Vine, A*, Gertrude  
     Atherton, 24, 119, 238, 241, 288,  
     378  
 Davidson, George, 121, 123  
 Davis, Richard Harding, 218  
 Davis, Senator, of Minnesota, 303  
 Deacon, Mrs. (see Baldwin, Flor-  
     ence)  
 'Dear Maria' letters, 303  
 De Barril, Maria, 520  
 Debenham and Freebody, 449  
 Dedham, Massachusetts, 63  
*Delineator, The*, 489, 512  
 De Long, Edith Haggin, 520

- De Mille, Cecil, 525  
 Democratic Party, 459  
 Demosthenes, 553  
 Denmark, 339  
 Denman, William, 436  
 Denman, Mrs. William, 436  
 Devol, Dr. Edmund, 486, 488, 514,  
     520  
 Devonshire, Dukes of, 239  
 De Wolfe, Elsie, 492  
*Diary*, John Evelyn, 101  
*Diary*, Samuel Pepys, 101  
 Dibblee, Mrs., 188, 198  
 Dickens, Charles, 44  
 Dilke, Sir Charles, 356  
 Dilke, Lady, 357  
 Dillon, Lord, 367, 389  
 Dillon, Lady, 367, 389  
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 371  
 Ditchley, Oxfordshire, 390  
 Dobie, Charles Caldwell, 531, 534  
 Dodd, Mead & Company, 275  
*Dodo*, E. F. Benson, 230  
 Dominga, daughter of Muriel, 547  
 Donghi, Marchesa, 462  
*Don Juan*, Byron, 56  
 Donohue, Peter, 14  
*Doomswoman, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 199, 215, 220, 221  
 Douglass, Frederick, 329  
 Dowson, Ernest, 251, 513  
 Doyle, Arthur Conan, 217, 230, 244  
 Doyle, John T., 78, 87, 95, 103  
 Dragoumis, Mrs., 549  
 Duff, Lady Agnes, 408  
 Du Maurier, George Luis, 230  
 Duncan, Henry, 383  
 Dupplin, Lord, 408, 411  
 Durbrow, Carrie, 44  
 Durham, Earl of, 416, 417  
 Duryea, Mrs, 492  
 Duse, Eleonora, 352  
  
 EAMES, EMMA, 154, 155, 225  
*Ears of Twenty Americans, The*,  
     Gertrude Atherton, 193  
 Ebright, Dr., 524  
 Ecole Hôtelière, Passy, 491  
 Eddy, Mary Baker, 462  
 Edwards, Mr., 483  
 Edwards, Mrs., 483  
 Edwards, Jonathan, 483  
  
 Egan, Mr. 296  
 Egerton, George, 230  
 Elder, Paul, 415  
 Eldridge, Dolly, 38  
 Eliot, George, 134, 261  
 Elizabeth, Empress, of Austria, 289  
 Elizabeth Stuart, Queen, of Bohemia  
     414  
 Elkins, Senator, 472  
 Ellen, nurse, 81, 84, 87, 92  
 Ellis Street boarding-school, San  
     Francisco, 22  
 Elphinstone, Lord, 359  
*El Son* dance, 189  
 Emerson, Ralph Waldo 101  
 Enclos, Ninon, de l', 546  
*Encyclopædia Britannica*, 448  
*Eothen*, Kinglake, 101  
*Esclarmonde*, Massenet, 118, 156,  
     181  
*Essay on Style*, Spencer, 101  
*Essays*, Emerson, 101  
*Essays*, Macaulay, 101  
 Essex, Lady, 228  
*Esther Waters*, George Moore, 384  
 Eugénie, Empress, 111  
 Euripides, 546  
 Evelyn, John, 101  
*Evening Bulletin, San Francisco*, 436  
*Evening Post, New York*, 488  
*Evening Telegram, New York*, 487  
*Examiner, San Francisco*, 201, 203,  
     209, 210, 212, 221, 387  
 Eyre, Edward, 87, 187  
 Eyre, Mrs. Edward, 63, 64, 67, 73,  
     74, 79, 87, 90, 91, 97, 127, 135,  
     138, 186, 187  
 Eyre, Sophie, 152  
  
 FAIR OAKS, CALIFORNIA (*see* Atherton, California)  
 Farewell Address, Washington's, 309  
 Farm Street Church, London, 257  
 Fassbender, opera singer, 352, 434  
 Fawcett, Edgar, 78  
 Fawcett, John, 313  
 Fawcett, Mary, 313  
 Fawcett, Rachel (*see* Levine, Rachel)  
 Fay, Charles, 460, 531  
 Fay, Maude, 351, 352, 407, 419,  
     428, 457, 531  
 Feinhals, opera singer, 351

Ferguson, Elsie, 512, *note*  
 Feuchtwanger, Lion, 414, *note*  
*Few of Hamilton's Letters, A*, Gertrude Atherton, 325, 336, 343  
 Field, Judge, 45  
 Field, Kate, 185  
 Field, Sarah Bard, 534  
 Fife, Earl of, 408  
*First Principles*, Spencer, 101  
 Fiske, John, 107  
 Fiske, Harrison Grey, 439  
 Fiske, Minnie Maddern, 438, 461  
 Fitzmaurice, Lord Charles, 385  
 Flagg, James Montgomery, 288  
 Flaubert, Gustave, 163  
 Flood, Mr., 69  
 Flood, Mrs., 69  
 Flood, 'Miss Jennie,' 70  
 Flower, Mr., 409  
 Flower, Mrs., 409  
 Fong, cook, 80, 83, 86, 87, 93  
 Forman, Henry James, 520  
 Fortnightly Club, San Francisco, 117  
 Fort Ross, California, 216  
 Fox, Charles J., 101  
 France, 428; (*see also* individual places in)  
 Frankfort, 457  
 Franklin, Amos, 12  
 Franklin, Benjamin, 12, 144  
 Franklin, Gertrude (*see* Uhlhorn, Mrs.)  
 Franklin, John, 13, 52  
 Franklin, Stephen, 12, 23, 33, 34, 35, 39, 45, 53, 55, 89, 95, 104, 107, 111, 119, 132, 136, 138, 184, 205, 207, 296, 302  
 Franklin, Mrs. Stephen, 17, 38  
 Franz Ferdinand, Crown Prince, 487  
 Franz Joseph, Emperor, 343  
 Frederic, Harold, 230, 304, 307  
 Frederiksted, St. Croix, 323  
 Frewen, Morton, 381  
 Frewen, Mrs. Morton, 228  
 Fry, Oliver, 222, 247, 275, 277, 288  
 Funston, General, 398  
 Fussen, Bavaria, 421

GALSWORTHY, JOHN, 446  
 Garonne, River, 489

Gauguin, Paul, 255  
 Geneva, 544  
 Genoa, 467  
 George, King of Greece, 340  
*German Pompadour, A*, Marie von Hindenburg, 414  
 Germany, 415, 419, 457;  
 (*see also* individual places in)  
 Ghent, 306  
 Gilder, Jeannette, 226  
 Gilder, Richard Watson, 147  
 Gilman, Dorothy, 520  
*Gipsy Brenton Series*, 34  
*Girls' Realm*, 246  
 Gladstone, William E., 101, 230, 371  
 Glasgow, Ellen, 519  
*Gleanings of Past Years*, Gladstone, 101  
 Glyn, Elinor, 367, 428, 525  
 Goddard, Madeline (*see* Andigné, Marquise d')  
 Godwin, E. W., 179  
*Golden Bowl, The*, Henry James, 363  
 Goldmann, Sidney, 289  
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 107  
 Goldwyn, Mr., 525  
 Goldwyn Studio, 526  
 Goñi, Alberto de, 125, 127, 130, 132  
 Goñi, Dominga de (*see* Atherton, Mrs. Faxon Dean)  
 Gordon, Mr., 94, 237  
 Gordon, Mrs., 237  
 Gordon, Nelly, 24, 94, 95, 237  
*Gorgeous Isle, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 377  
 Gosse, Edmund, 230, 280, 360, 363, 365  
 Goujon, Madame, 493, 494  
*Gouverneur Morris*, Roosevelt, 331  
 Grabau, Professor, 487  
 Granby, Lord (*see* Rutland, Duke of)  
 Granby, Lady, 384  
 Grand Opera House, San Francisco, 121  
 Grant, Helen, 115  
*Graphic*, London, 218  
 Giattani, Henry, 301  
 Gravenitz, Wilhelmine von, 414  
 Greaves, Vice-Consul, 312  
 Greece, 547

Greene, Belle, 519  
 Grisi, opera singer, 370  
 Grogan, Mr., 79, 88, 93  
 Guedalla, Philip, 534  
 Guerra, Carlos de la, 198  
 Guerra, Delfina de la, 199  
 Guerra, Herminia de la, 199  
 Guerra, José de la, 197  
 Guerra, Pablo de la, 197  
  
 HABBERTON, JOHN, 217  
 Hackensack, New Jersey, 142  
 Hager, Alice, 436  
 Haggard, Colonel, 291  
 Haggin, Edith (*see* Lounsbury, Mrs. Richard)  
 Hahn-Hahn, Countess, 174  
 Haight, Miss, school-teacher, 39  
 Haldane, Mr., 388  
 Hale, Senator, 298, 302, 306  
 Hall, Blakeley, 152  
 Hall, Major 'Johnnie,' 383  
 Hall, Mrs. John, 382, 453, 455  
 Hall, Mortimer, 40  
 Halliburton, Richard, 534  
 Hallowell, Charlotte, 520  
 Hallowell, Robert, 520  
 Hall's Hotel, London, 441  
 Hamilton, Dr. Allan McLane, 309, 334  
 Hamilton, Alexander, 57, 301, 306, 339, 342, 448  
 Hamilton, Mrs. Alexander, 334  
 Hamilton, Clayton, 525, 526  
 Hamilton, Mrs. Clayton, 525  
 Hamilton, Sir Ian, 358, 392  
 Hamilton, Lady, 358, 386, 392  
 Hamilton, James, 313, 332, 342  
 Hamilton, 'Ned,' 209  
*Hamilton's Letters*, Lodge, 331  
 Hannah, maid, 117, 118, 128, 129, 137, 139, 142, 144, 152, 186  
 Hardenberg, Prince von, 301  
 Hardy, Thomas, 171, 230, 259  
 Hardy, Mrs. Thomas, 259  
 Hare, John, 245  
 Harland, Henry, 230, 241, 304  
 Harper, Henry, 140  
 Harper, House of, 140, 485  
*Harper's*, 147, 218  
 Harraden, Beatrice, 230, 244

Harris, Carlyle, 223  
 Harris, Major, 343  
 Harris, Mrs. (Major), 343, 345  
 Harrison, Henry Sydnor, 520  
 Hart, Jerome, 99  
 Harte, Bret, 24, 71, 144, 180, 186, 217, 394  
 Hartmann, George, 520  
 Hartmann, Mrs. George, 521  
 Harvey, Anita Cooper, 532  
 Harvey, Downey, 403, 437, 465, 466  
 Harvey, Mrs. Downey, 437, 531, 532  
 Harvey, Geneviève Barron, 532  
 Hatch, Miss, school-teacher, 42, 43  
 Hatfield House, 260  
 Haussenville, Comtesse d', 495, 496, 497  
 Haworth, Yorkshire, 233  
 Hawthorne, Hildegarde, 520  
 Hawthorne, Julian, 217  
 Hawthorne, Una, 247  
 Hay, Marie (*see* Hindenburg, Marie von)  
 Hearn, Lafcadio, 326  
 Hearst, William Randolph, 87, 201, 209  
 Heine, Heinrich, 174, 333  
 Heinemann, William, 231, 300  
 Helena, Montana, 479  
 Heney, Francis, 436, 437  
 Heney, Mrs. Francis, 437  
 Henriette, sister of Madame Waddington, 493  
 Henry VIII, King of England, 169  
 Henry of Pless, Princess, 258  
*Herald, New York*, 337  
*Herald, New York* (Paris ed.), 153, 419, 474  
 Herkomer, Sir H., 260  
 Herkomer Art School, 259  
*Hermia Suydam*, Gertrude Atherton, 148, 149, 151, 166, 176  
 Herodotus, 95  
 Herrick, Ambassador, 515  
 Hertfordshire, 260  
 Hewlett, Maurice, 230  
 Hichens, Robert, 230  
 Hickman, Alfred, 520  
 Hindenburg, Herbert von, 412, 424, 457  
 Hindenburg, Marie von, 408, 411, 424, 457

*History of California*, Hittell, 189  
*History of England*, Hume, 37  
*History of England*, Macaulay, 101  
*History of English Literature*, Taine, 101  
*History of the Crimean War*, Kinglake, 101  
*History of the French Revolution*, Thiers, 37  
Hittell, historian, 189  
Hobart, Garret A., 295  
Hobbes, John Oliver, 230, 244  
Hof-und-National Theatre, Munich, 351  
Hogan, Elizabeth (*see* McEnerney, Mrs. Garret)  
Hogan, Elodie (*see* Belloc, Mrs. Hilaire)  
Hohenschwangau, Bavaria, 421  
Holbein, 390  
Hollywood, 525  
Holman, Mrs. Alfred (*see* Durbrow, Carrie)  
Holman-Black, Mr., 494  
Holt Company, Henry, 139  
Holt, Henry, 139  
Hope, Anthony, 230, 244  
Hopkins, Mark, 55  
Hoppner, artist, 390  
Hopwood, Avery, 282, 519, 541  
Horn, Benjamin, 15  
Horn, Gertrude (*see* Atherton, Gertrude)  
Horn, Thomas Lodowick, 15, 16, 30  
Horn, William Palmer, 464  
Horner, Mr., 388  
Horner, Mrs., 387  
Houghton Mifflin Company, 106, 414  
Howard, Charles Webb, 121  
Howard, Sir Esmé, 533  
Howard, Maude, 117  
Howard, Norfolk, 386  
Howard, Shafter, 117  
Howe, Mrs. Percy, 237, 239  
Howell, John, 405  
Howells, William Dean, 107, 148  
Howland, Colonel, 531, 549  
Hucknall-Torkard, England, 241  
Hudson River, 334  
Hughes, Rupert, 520, 526  
Humboldt, William von, 301  
Hume, David, 37, 101

Hungary, 343  
Hurricane of 1899, 322, 325  
Hurst, Fannie, 520  
*Ian Hamilton's March*, Winston Churchill, 382  
Ibsen, Henrik, 230  
*Immortal Marriage*, The, Gertrude Atherton, 333, 548, 558  
*Innocents Abroad*, Mark Twain, 24  
International Allied Relief, The, 510  
Irving, Henry, 230  
Irving, Isabel, 520  
Irving, Washington, 36  
Irwin, Letitia, 520  
Irwin, Wallace, 520  
Isar river, 351, 352  
'Is Life Worth Living?' Mona Caird, 170

JAMES, HENRY, 107, 110, 116, 230, 244, 279, 363  
*Jane Eyre*, Charlotte Brontë, 37, 233, 237, 238, 262, 378  
Jay, Mrs. William, 520  
*Jealous Gods*, The, Gertrude Atherton, 333, 558  
Jefferson, Thomas, 333  
Jerome, Jennie (*see* Churchill, Lady Randolph)  
Jeune, Sir Francis, 366  
Jeune, Lady (*see* St. Helier, Lady)  
Jew Süß, Feuchtwanger, 414, *note*  
Jewett, Rutger, 520  
Jiméno, Señora, 193  
Johnson, Hiram, 437  
Johnson, Owen, 489, 519  
Johnson, Mrs. Owen, 519  
Jolon, California, 81  
Jones, Henry Arthur, 230  
Jones Street, San Francisco, 31  
Jordan, Elizabeth, 221, 484, 487, 519  
*Julia France and Her Times*, Gertrude Atherton, 458  
*Jürgen*, James Branch Cabell, 555  
Jusserand, Jean Jules, 515  
KAUFMAN GIRLS, 117, 121  
Kefney, Annie, 455  
Kelly, Ruth, 408, 429  
Kenyon, Charles, 526  
Keogh, Martin J., 225

Keppel, artist, 390  
 Kidder, Katherine, 520  
 Kimbrough, Frank, 261, 288  
 Kinahan, Mrs., 264, 278, 382  
 King, Captain Charles, 217  
 Kinglake, writer, 101  
 Kinnoul, Lady, 411  
 Kinsky, Prince, 381  
 Kip, Bishop, 42, 143  
 Kip, Mrs. 'Willie,' 143  
 Kipling, Rudyard, 217, 230  
*Kismet*, Knoblock, 527  
 Kitchener, Lord, 385  
 Klausenburg, Hungary, 346  
 Kline, Mrs., 521  
 Knoblock, Edward, 525, 527  
 Knot, opera singer, 351, 352  
 Kyne, Peter B., 534

LADD, GEORGE, 19  
*Lady Without Mercy, The*, 120  
 Lambton, John (*see* Durham, Earl of)  
*Lamuel*, Stendahl, 262  
 Lansdowne, Marchioness of, 387  
 Lane, John, 231, 256, 265, 304, 306, 335  
 Lang, Andrew, 230  
 Langtry, Lily, 258, 545  
 Lankester, Ray, 388  
 Latham, Milton S., 70, 87  
 Latham, Mrs. Milton S., 24, 70, 87  
 Laurelwood Estate, California, 14  
 Lavine, Peter, 332  
 League of Nations, 547  
 Lee, Arthur, 449  
 Lee, Miss (sister of Arthur Lee), 450  
 Lee, Sidney, 373  
 Lee, Vernon, 78  
*Leeds Mercury*, 287  
 Le Gallienne, Richard, 230, 244, 304, 377  
 Leighton, Frederic, 174  
 Lely, Sir Peter, 390  
 Lenin, Nikolay, 517  
 Leslie, Mrs., 228  
 Levine, Rachel, 313, 324, 339, 342  
 Levine (husband of Rachel Levine), 313, 342  
 Levy, Amy, 170  
 Lewis, Sinclair, 484, 485, 519

Lexington, Kentucky, 45, 47  
 Liesecke, Fräulein, 425  
*Life and Letters of Edmund Gosse, The*, Charteris, 377  
*Life of Lord Randolph Churchill*, Winston Churchill, 382  
 Lin, Frank (pseudonym of Gertrude Atherton), 144  
 Linby, England, 241  
 Lincoln, Abraham, 20, 329, 333  
 Lippe, Count Alfred zu, 408, 426  
*Lippincott's Magazine*, 217, 218  
 Lister-Kaye, Lady, 228  
 Littleton, Martin, 520  
*Little Women*, Alcott, 34, 303  
 Liveright, Horace, 541, 542  
*Living Age*, 148  
*Living Present, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 491  
 Lloyd George, David, 516  
 Locke, William, 230, 304  
 Lodge, Henry Cabot, 331, 332  
*Lohengrin*, Wagner, 352  
 London, Charmion, 534  
 London, 11, 167, 170, 227, 242, 257, 264, 275, 293, 299, 306, 355, 363, 365, 441  
 Londonderry, Marchioness of, 371  
*London to Ladysmith*, Winston Churchill, 382  
 Lone Mountain cemetery, San Francisco, 11, 54  
 Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth, 56  
 Longworth, Nicholas, 533  
*Lord Jim*, Joseph Conrad, 452  
 Lorenz, Dr., 536, 537  
 Loreto Mission Church, California, 190  
 Los Angeles, 200  
 Los Gatos, California, 524  
 Loti, Pierre, 495  
 Lotta, 113  
*Louis Norbert*, Vernon Lee, 78  
 Lounsbury, Grace Constant, 309, 334  
 Lounsbury, Mrs. Richard, 309  
 Lovell, Mr., 393  
 Lowell, Amy, 519  
 Lowndes, Mrs. Belloc, 242, 285  
 Lowndes, Gertrude, 231, 488  
 Lowndes, Lloyd, 231, 488  
 Ludwig, King, of Bavaria, 352



- Ludwig II, King, of Bavaria, 352,  
 421, 434  
 Lyceum Club, London, 248  
 Lydig, Rita, 520  
 Lynch, Hannah, 248  
 Lyon, Madame Camille, 501, 506  
 Lyttelton, Alfred, 385  
 Lyttelton, Mrs. Alfred, 386  
 Lytton, Peter, 325  
 Lytton, Mrs. (aunt of Alexander  
 Hamilton), 314
- MAARTENS, MAARTEN, 445, 446  
 McAllister, Edith, 123  
 McAllister, Hall, 123  
 McAllister, Mrs. Hall, 100, 123, 126  
 McAllister, Marian, 123, 126  
 McAllister, Ward, 123  
 Macaulay, Thomas Babington, 101  
 McClellan, Major, 47, 49, 90  
 McClellan, Mrs., 47  
 McCutcheon, George Barr, 520  
 McEnerney, Garret, 213  
 McEnerney, Mrs. Garret, 213  
 Mackay, Katherine Duer, 440, 455  
 McKinley, William, 288, 299  
 McKinley, Mrs. William, 299  
 MacLane, Mary, 478  
 McLean, Mr., 153  
 Macleod, Fiona (*see* Sharp, William)  
 Macmillan & Company, 335, 337,  
 363  
 McMullen, Mollie (*see* Latham, Mrs.  
 Milton S.)  
 McNulty, Jennie, 24  
 Macondray, Mr., 77  
 Macondray, Mrs. (*see* Selby, Mrs.  
 Percy)  
 Macondray, Iñez, 547  
 Macondray, Nina, 133, 156  
 Mail and Express, New York, 336  
 Main Street, Sinclair Lewis, 484,  
 485  
 Majesty, Couperus, 251  
 Malet, Lucas, 230  
 Manchester, Duke of, 70  
 Manchester, Duchess of, 228  
 Manchester Guardian, 231, 261, 287  
 Manhattanville, New York, 225  
 Mann, Thomas, 408, 445  
 Manners, Diana, 411
- Man of Property, A, John Gals-  
 worthy, 446  
 Maranoff, Fania (*see* Van Vechten,  
 Mrs. Carl)  
 Marbury, Elisabeth, 492, 520  
 Marie Madeleine, Massenet, 155  
 Marie Vetsera, 344  
 Mariette, Baroness, 353, 426  
 Marin County, California, 434  
 Mario, Giuseppe, 370  
 Marlborough, Duke of, 277, 284,  
 367, 369, 448  
 Marlborough, Duchess of, 43, 228,  
 367, 448  
 Martinique Island, 310, 326  
 Mascagni, Pietro, 190  
 Mason, A. E. W., 367  
 Mason, Rowena, 534  
 Massarenes, The, Ouida, 372  
 Massenet, Jules, 118, 154, 155, 156,  
 157, 181  
 Matthews, William, 48, 314  
 Matzenauer, opera singer, 351  
 Maud, Queen, of Norway, 340  
 Maugham, Somerset, 445, 525  
 Maxwell, Ella, 24  
 Mears, Dr., 33  
 Meaux, France, 501  
 Meinicke, Georg, 117, 121  
 Meister, Herr von, 414  
 Meister, Leila von, 414, 457  
 Melba, Madame, 225, 370  
 Melka, artist, 348  
 Melka, Mrs., 347  
 Mendell, Mrs. Harry, 531, 534  
 Menlo Park, California, 66, 69, 96,  
 102, 107, 116, 186, 187, 209, 400  
 Meredith, George, 178, 180, 202,  
 203, 230  
 Merode, Cléo de, 472  
 Merritt, Lake, California, 30  
 Mexico City, 193  
 Meynell, Alice, 284, 285, 286  
 Milestones, Knoblock, 527  
 Millais, Sir John Everett, 174  
 Miller, Alice Duer, 525  
 Miller, Lizzie, 19  
 Miller, Joaquin, 118  
 Mills, D. O., 13, 15, 144  
 Mills Seminary, 73  
 Milpitas Ranch, California, 80, 84,  
 169

- Miss Brown*, Vernon Lee, 78  
 Mitchell, Mrs., 314  
 Mitchell, Ruth Comfort, 534  
 Moffat, John, 510  
 Monaco, 470  
 Montalvo, Ordonez de, 527  
 Montalvo, California, 527  
 Montana, 467  
 Monte Carlo, 470, 544  
 Monterey, California, 189  
 Montez, Lola, 352  
 Montreal, 439  
 Montserrat, 322  
*Moonstone, The*, 101  
 Moore, George, 163, 171, 181, 230, 384  
 Moréna, opera singer, 352  
 Morgan, Anne, 492, 512  
 Morgan, General, 45  
 Morgan, Pierpont, 367  
 Morley, John, 367  
*Morning Call*, San Francisco, 436  
*Morning Post*, London, 433  
 Morris, Gouverneur, 526  
 Morris, William, 379  
 Morrison, Arthur, 230  
 Morrison, Judge, 31  
 Morrison, Mrs., 31  
 Morrow, Honoré Willsie, 489, 519  
 Morrow, William, 213, 489  
 Morse, writer, 332  
 Mott, Bently, 121  
 Mottl, Felix, 351  
 Moulton, Louise Chandler, 170  
 Mühlbach, Louisa, 27  
 Muir Glacier, 407  
*Mummer's Wife, The*, George Moore, 165  
 Munich, 343, 349, 362, 365, 389, 407, 421, 433  
 Murray, Sir John, 441, 547  
  
 NAGY-ALFÖLD, HUNGARY, 346  
 Nancy, France, 508  
 Napa, California, 213  
 Napoleon, 302, 333  
 Naylor-Leyland, Lady, 228  
 Neuschwanstein, Bavaria, 421  
 Nevill, Lady Dorothy, 445  
 Nevis Island, 311, 312, 377, 438, 458  
 New Haven, 14  
 New Orleans, 12  
  
*New Republic, The*, 520  
*News Letter*, 106  
 Newstead Abbey, 241, 242  
 New York City, 13, 14, 20, 57, 139, 184, 220, 308, 330, 343, 345, 519, 535, 555  
 Niagara Falls, 357  
 Nice, 470  
 Nicolas, Prince, of Greece, 548  
 Nicoll, Dr. Robertson, 230, 245, 264, 287, 333  
 Nilsson, Christine, 370  
 'Nob Hill,' San Francisco, 55  
 Noble, 'Cosy,' 209  
 Nordica, Lillian, 225  
 Norman, Gertrude, 408, 419, 420, 457  
 Norman, Henry, 357  
 Norris, Charles, 534  
 Norris, Kathleen, 534  
*North American Review*, 341, 342, 448  
 Northcliffe, Lord, 437, 438, 446, 447, 459, 516  
 Northcliffe, Lady, 437, 447  
 Norton, Emperor, 11  
*Number 5 John Street*, Whiteing, 376  
  
 OAK GROVE AVENUE, SAN FRANCISCO, 23  
 Oakland, California, 29, 30, 73, 394, 396, 398  
 O'Brien, Mr., 69  
 O'Connor, T. P., 259  
 O'Connor, Mrs. T. P., 244  
 Æconemon, Professor, 549  
*Œdipus Colonus*, Sophocles, 536  
 Offenbach, Jacques, 351  
 Older, Fremont, 436, 437, 534  
 Older, Mrs. Fremont, 436, 534, 549  
*Old Wives' Tale, The*, Arnold Bennett, 446  
 Oliver, Captain, 383  
 Oliver, Frederick Scott, 448  
 Oliviera, Madame d', 266  
 O'Neil, Nance, 520  
 O'Neil, Rose (Kewpie), 520  
*Opéra*, Paris, 154, 158, 160  
*Opéra Comique*, Paris, 152, 158, 160  
 Opera House, San Francisco, 123  
 Optic, Oliver, 34, 36  
 Oroville, California, 93, 94, 111, 132

- Orsay, Count d', 370  
*Other House, The*, Henry James, 363  
 Otto, King, 425  
 Ouida, 15, 37, 372, 392  
*Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, Fiske, 107  
*Overland Monthly*, 119  
 Oxford, England, 292  
 Oxford, New York, 12
- PAGE, ARTHUR, 91, 131  
 Page, Lizzie, 67  
 Page, Manuela, 67  
 Palace Hotel, San Francisco, 55, 70, 463  
 Palmerston, Lord, 370  
 Palmert, Elise, 350, 355, 390, 433  
 Palo Alto, California, 96  
 Panama-Pacific Exposition, 485  
 Pankhurst, Mrs., 455, 456  
 Pankhurst, Christabel, 455  
 Pankhurst, Sylvia, 455  
 Paris, 152, 249, 489, 490, 505, 516  
 Parker, Mr., librarian, 331, 525  
 Parker, Sir Gilbert, 230, 555  
*Parsifal*, Wagner, 351, 430  
 Parton, writer, 333  
 Pass Christian, Mississippi, 13  
 Pater, Walter, 295  
*Patience Sparhawk and Her Times*, Gertrude Atherton, 226, 231, 242, 248, 261, 264, 287, 303, 304  
 Patten, the Misses, 522  
 Patti, Adelina, 124, 370  
*Pearls of Loreto*, Gertrude Atherton, 190, 218  
 Peel, Agnes, 289  
 Peel, Lord, 289  
 Peel, Sir Robert, 289  
 Pelée, Mont, 310, 322, 330  
 Pemberton, Max, 230, 232  
 Pepys, Samuel, 101  
*Perch of the Devil*, Gertrude Atherton, 471, 484, 485, 536  
 Pericles, 553  
*Pericles and Aspasia*, Schmidt, 550  
 Perkins, Cleveland, 297  
 Perkins, Henry Cleveland, 297  
 Perkins, Mrs. Henry Cleveland, 297  
 Perkins, Miriam, 297  
 Perkins, Ruth, 297  
 Petaluma, California, 393
- Pethick-Lawrence, Mrs., 455  
 Petrarch, 286  
*Peverel of the Peak*, 88  
 Peyton, Julia, 117  
*Phaedo*, Plato, 58  
 Phelan, James D., 53, 403, 435, 436, 447, 460, 464, 512, 514, 521, 527  
 Phelan, Miss, 531  
 Philadelphia, 220  
 Phillips, Lionel, 290  
 Phillips, Stephen, 230  
 Phillpotts, Eden, 230  
*Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire, 107  
*Phryné*, Saint-Saëns, 160  
*Pilcomayo*, 125, 127  
 Pinero, Sir Arthur Wing, 230  
 Pitt, William, 101, 301  
 Pixley, Mr., 99, 100  
 Plançon, Pol, 225  
 Plato, 58, 550  
 Pliny, 339  
 Pocahontas, 384  
 Poitiers, Diane de, 414  
 Poland, 517  
 Poniatowski, Princess, 496, 498  
 Pont Aven, Brittany, 249, 364  
 Pope, Florence, 38  
 Portland, Duke of, 455  
 Potter, Bishop, 148  
 Potter, Mrs. James Brown, 544, 545, 556  
 Poynter, Mrs., 357  
*Princess Casamassima*, Henry James, 363  
 Prinz-Regenten Theatre, Munich, 351  
*Professor, The*, Charlotte Brontë, 238  
 Prussia, 341  
 'Pulgas, Los' (see Valparaiso Park)  
 Putney, England, 376
- Queed*, Henry Sydnor Harrison, 520  
 Queen Anne's Mansions, London, 441, 444  
 Queensberry, Lord, 229  
*Quick or the Dead, The*, Amélie Rives, 388

RALPH, JULIAN, 152

- Ralston, Sam, 42  
 Ralston, William C., 13, 15, 35, 50, 52  
 Ralston, Mrs. William C., 43  
*Ramble with Eulogia, A*, Gertrude Atherton, 196  
 Ramsing, Captain, 341, 342  
 Ranch, The, California, 14, 17, 34, 54, 104, 219  
*Randolphs of Redwoods, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 99, 103, 105, 119, 126, 134, 237  
 Ransomes, the, 94  
 Rathbone, Major Lawrence, 64, 79, 126, 131, 133, 153, 221, 343  
 Rathbone, Mrs. Lawrence, 24, 65, 66, 72, 76, 79, 84, 97, 100, 103, 106, 115, 126, 133, 152, 154, 156, 164, 186, 188  
 Rathbone, Lawrence, Jun., 72  
 Reay, Lord, 388  
 Récamier, Madame, 521  
*Record Herald*, Chicago, 336  
 Redwood City, California, 88  
 Reid, Whitelaw, 144, 166  
 Reid, Mrs. Whitelaw, 166  
 Reinach, Joseph, 494  
*Report on Manufactures*, Alexander Hamilton, 332  
*Report on Public Credit*, Alexander Hamilton, 332  
 Repplier, Agnes, 220  
 Republican Party, 459  
 Reszke, Edouard de, 225  
 Reszke, Jean de, 225, 370, 457  
 Reynolds, Mrs., school-teacher, 22  
*Rezánov*, Gertrude Atherton, 199, 394, 407, 551  
 Rhine River, 306  
 Rhodes, Cecil, 291, 297, 359  
 Rhodes, Edith, 291  
 Rhodes, Colonel Frank, 359  
 Rice, Elmer, 526  
 Rice, Mr., editor, 341  
 Richelieu, Duc de, 519  
 Richelieu, Duchesse de, 519  
 Richter, Dr., 408  
 Richter, Georg, 408  
 Riggsses, the, 295  
 Riley, James Whitcomb, 148  
 Rincon Hill, San Francisco, 12, 16, 30, 63  
 Rinehart, Mary Roberts, 525  
 Rising, Lawrence, 520  
*River War, The*, Winston Churchill, 382  
 Rives, Amélie, 217, 219, 388  
 Roberts, Lord, 385  
 Roberts, Lady, 386  
 Roberts, Mary, 520  
 Roberts, William, 520  
 Robertson, Alexander, 101, 142, 534  
 Robertson, Harry, 534  
 Robinson, Afred, 197  
 Roderick Hudson, Henry James, 116  
 Romneys, the, 413  
 Roosevelt, James Roosevelt, 243  
 Roosevelt, Theodore, 303, 331, 403, 460, 464  
 Rosebery, Lord, 258, 437  
*Rose of the World*, Agnes and Eger-ton Castle, 374  
 Ross, California, 186, 188, 201  
 Rossetti, Dante Gabriel, 174, 178  
 Rothschilds, the, 51  
 Rouen, 271  
 Row, Arthur, 520  
 Rudolph, Crown Prince, 344, 348  
 Ruef, Abg, 403, 404, 436  
*Rulers of Kings*, Gertrude Atherton, 343, 355, 377, 463  
 Ruprecht, Prince, 353  
 Russell, W. Clark, 217  
 Russia, 487, 498, 516, 517  
 Russy de Sales, Comtesse de, 496  
 Rutland, Duke of, 382  
*Rutledge*, 37  
*Sacred Fount, The*, 363  
 Sacred Heart Convents, 167, 168, 188, 225  
 St. Augustine's College, 42  
 St. Christopher, B.W.I. (*see* St. Kitts, B.W.I.)  
 St. Croix, Island of, 314, 322, 341, 342  
 St. Helier, Sir Francis, 447  
 St. Helier, Lady, 365, 388, 447  
 St. Kitts, B.W.I., 309, 310, 315  
 St. Mary's Hall school, 42, 44  
 St. Pierre, Martinique, 326, 330  
 Saint-Saëns, Charles, 160  
 St. Thomas Island, 328  
 Salinas, California, 80  
 Salisbury, Lord, 228, 259

- Saltus, Edgar, 142, 151, 217  
 San Antonio Mission, 82, 87, 169  
 Sand, George, 15  
 Sanderson, Edith, 155  
 Sanderson, Jennie, 155  
 Sanderson, Judge, 118, 124  
 Sanderson, Marian, 155  
 Sanderson, Sibyl, 118, 151, 152, 156, 157  
 San Francisco, 11, 13, 15, 33, 52, 64, 68, 117, 121, 141, 148, 172, 201, 217, 379, 393, 394, 395, 435, 457, 485, 553, 556  
 San Francisco Art Association, 534  
 San José, California, 19, 52, 58  
 San Juan Bautista, California, 192  
 San Luis Obispo, California, 193  
 Santa Barbara, California, 188, 197  
 Santa Clara Valley, California, 528  
 Santa Inez, California, 196  
 Sarajevo, 487  
 Sargent, John Singer, 174, 448  
 Sassoon, Philip, 421  
*Saturday Review*, 230, 287  
 Sausalito, California, 399  
 Saxony, King of, 354  
 Sayre Institute, 45, 47, 89  
 Schemmerhorn, Mrs., 520  
 Schleswig-Holstein, 341  
 Schleswig-Holstein, Duchess of, 354  
 Schmidt, Dr., 542, 550  
 Schmitz, Mayor, 403, 436  
 Schuyler, Philip, 335  
 Schwartz, Van der Poorten (see Maartens, Maarten)  
*Science and Health*, Mary Baker Eddy, 462  
 Scott, Dr., 35  
 Scott, Leroy, 520  
 Scott, Mrs. Leroy, 520  
 Scott, Temple, 330  
 Scott, Sir Walter, 84  
*Scribner's Magazine*, 147  
 Scribner's Sons, Charles, 119, 414  
 Seine River, 269  
 Selby, Annie, 107, 108  
 Selby, Jeannie (see Atherton, Mrs. Faxon)  
 Selby, Percy, 70, 87, 107, 188  
 Selby, Mrs. Percy, 24, 64, 65, 68, 70, 72, 77, 79, 87, 107, 108, 127, 128, 186, 188  
*Senator North*, Gertrude Atherton, 294, 301, 303, 306, 330, 342, 378, 469  
 Serbia, 488  
 Service and Paton, 265, 288, 303, 306  
 Seventeen-Mile Drive, California, 191  
 Seward, William Henry, 65  
 Shakspeare, William, 57  
 Shannon, Sir J. J., 245  
 Sharp, William, 166, 169, 177, 178, 180, 184, 230, 231  
 Sharp, Mrs. William, 166, 169, 177, 231  
 Shaw, George Bernard, 230, 244, 446  
 Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 56  
 Sheridan, Clare, 381  
 Sherman, William T., 189  
 Sherwood Studio Building, New York, 221  
*Ships That Pass in the Night*, Beatrice Harraden, 244  
 Shrewsbury, Earl of, 371  
 Sickert, Walter, 174  
 Sillen, Mrs. (see Kinahan, Mrs.)  
 Sinclair, May, 248  
*Sisters-in-Law*, Gertrude Atherton, 524, 539  
 Sitka, Alaska, 406, 407  
 Skaggs Springs, California, 133  
*Sketch*, 287  
 Sladen, Douglas, 285  
 Smalley, George, 167, 168  
 Smith, Ballard, 145, 221, 232  
 Smith, Consul-General, 469  
 Society of Authors, London, 263, 446  
 Socrates, 550  
 Somers, Frederick M., 147, 148, 149  
 Somerset, Duchess of, 357, 371  
*Sophisticates*, The, Gertrude Atherton, 544  
 Sophocles, 546  
 South Africa, 289, 297  
*Speaker*, London, 241  
*Spectator*, London, 166, 215, 231, 287  
 Spencer, Herbert, 101, 107, 270, 305  
 'Spesanza' (see Wilde, Lady)  
 Spingler Institute, 13  
*Splendid Idle Forties*, The, Gertrude Atherton, 190, 378

- Spoils of Poynton*, Henry James, 363  
 Spreckels, Rudolph, 436  
 Spring, Miss, school-teacher, 38  
 Spring-Rice, Cecil, 522  
 "Spy" (see Ward, Leslie)  
 Staël, Madame de, 521  
 Stafford House, London, 258  
*Standard-Union*, Brooklyn, 337  
 Stanford, Leland, 55  
 Stanford University, 96  
 Stedman, Edmund Clarence, 143  
 Stein, Baron von, 301  
 Steinach, Dr., 536  
 Stendhal, 262  
 Sterling, George, 534  
 Stevens, Ashton, 244, 387, 394, 401, 438  
 Stevens, Mrs. Ashton, 26, 30, 33, 55, 120, 186, 187, 192, 194, 206, 218, 219, 242, 285, 354, 387, 394, 396, 401, 438, 439  
 Stevens, Emily, 520  
 Stevenson, Robert Louis, 203  
 Stockton, Frank, 78, 148  
 Stockton Street, San Francisco, 12, 20  
 Stoddard, Julia, 105  
 Stoddard, Rose, 25, 26, 27, 29, 30, 36, 60, 105, 128, 186, 207, 219, 350, 402  
 Stoddard, Mr., editor, 217  
 Stokes, James Brett, 211, 212, 485, 489  
 Stonehenge, 392  
 Stonington, Connecticut, 15  
 Storer, Bellamy, 303, 343  
 Storer, Mrs. Bellamy, 303  
*Story of Mary MacLane, The*, Mary MacLane, 478  
 Street, G. S., 230  
*Striding Place, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 241, 364  
 Strong, Belle, 467  
 Sullivan, Noël, 531  
 Suñol, California, 202  
 Sutherland, Duchess of, 258, 278, 282  
 Sweeney, Charles, 490  
 Swett, Mrs. Lorenzo de Medici, 296  
 Swettenham, Sir Frank, 452  
 Swinburne, Algernon, 376, 377  
 TACITUS, PUBLICUS CORNELIUS, 339  
 Taft, William Howard, 522  
 Taine, H. Adolphe, 101  
*Tales of Soldiers and Civilians*, Ambrose Bierce, 201, 206  
 Talleyrand-Périgord, Charles Maurice de, 301, 357  
 Talleyrand, Marquise de, 496  
 Tamalpais, Mount, California, 434  
 Tamagno, opera singer, 225  
 Tarrytown, New York, 334  
 Tennyson, Alfred, Lord, 118  
 Tennyson, Lord (son of Alfred), 356  
*Ten o'Clock*, Whistler, 177  
 Terry, Ellen, 230  
*Thais*, Massenet, 160  
 Theological Seminary, San Francisco, 57, 136  
 Theosophical Society, 116  
 Thiers, Louis Adolphe, 37  
 Thompson, Valentine, 491, 495  
 Thorne, Doctor, 56  
*Three Weeks*, Elinor Glyn, 428  
 Thucydides, 95  
*Times The*, London, 259, 378, 448  
*Times, New York*, 230, 336, 342, 509, 511, 512, 514, 516  
*Times, Philadelphia*, 336  
 Tobin, Agnes, 286  
 Toussaint L'Ouverture, François Dominique, 329  
 Tower, Reginald, 362, 408, 413  
*Tower of Ivory*, Gertrude Atherton, 353, 395, 420, 434, 525, 542  
 Towne, Charles Hanson, 486, 519  
*Tragic Muse, The*, Henry James, 363  
*Transplanted*, Gertrude Atherton, 275  
 Tree, Sir Herbert Beerbohm, 230  
 Trevelyan, Sir George, 361, 362  
 Trexler, Dr., 521  
*Tribune*, New York, 144, 167, 536  
*Trilby*, Du Maurier, 230  
*Tropic Bird*, 128, 130, 131  
 Trotsky, Leon, 517  
 Trulow, Mrs., artist, 253, 257  
 Tuck, Mrs., 492  
*Turn of the Screw, The*, Henry James, 363  
 Twain, Mark, 24, 148  
*Two Magics, The*, Henry James, 363

- Two Years Before the Mast*, Richard Henry Dana, 197
- UHLHORN, ALEECE (*see* Stevens, Mrs. Ashton)
- Uhlhorn, Daisy (*see* Craig, Mrs. John)
- Uhlhorn, John Frederick, 20, 22, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 30, 32, 33, 40
- Uhlhorn, Mrs. John Frederick, 14, 15, 25, 32, 33, 40, 52, 104, 120, 128, 129, 136, 142, 186, 207, 219
- Uhlhorn, Sarah Maria, 28
- Union Club, San Francisco, 102
- United States, 437, 440, 482, 542 ; (*see also* individual places in)
- United States Senate, 295
- Uzès, Duchesse d', 493, 494, 500
- VACHELL, HORACE ANNESLEY, 230, 250
- Valiant Runaways, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 288
- Valparaiso Park, 65, 68, 80, 95
- Van Anda, Mr., 516
- Van Bergen, William, 206, 208
- Vance, Louis Joseph, 520
- Vanderbilt, Mrs. W. K., \*Jun., 92, 492, 511
- Van Dresser, Marcia, 408, 419, 420, 457
- Vanity Fair*, London, 222, 232, 247, 275, 288, 364
- Van Rensselaer, Mrs. Schuyler, 519
- Van Vechten, Carl, 519, 541
- Van Vechten, Mrs. Carl, 519
- Varsi, Father, 59
- Vathek*, Beckford, 101
- Vega, De la, 196
- Velics, Frau von, 408
- Venezuela Controversy, 229
- Verdier, Captain, 490
- Verdun, 507
- Victoria, Princess, of England, 340
- Victoria, Queen, of England, 229, 370
- Vienna, 343, 344
- Visits of Elizabeth, The*, Elinor Glyn, 367, 368
- Voltaire, 101
- WADDINGTON, MADAME, 493, 496
- Wagner, Richard, 434
- Wagnerfeste, Munich, 351
- Ward, Geneviève, 244
- Ward, Mrs. Humphry, 229, 242, 314
- Ward, Leslie, 288
- Warm Springs Resort, 18
- Warren, Whitney, 489, 491
- Warren, Mrs. Whitney, 492
- Warwick, Lady, 258, 278, 282
- Washington, Booker T., 329
- Washington, George, 301, 309, 342
- Washington, D.C., 293, 295, 307
- Watkins, Dr. James T., 87, 109
- Watkins, Mrs. James T., 87, 109
- Watson, Dr., clergyman, 324
- Watts, George Frederick, 174
- Watts-Dunton, Theodore, 376
- Webster, Daniel, 64, 101
- Wellington, Duke of, 301
- Wells, H. G., 446
- Westminster Abbey, 371
- Westminster Gazette*, 261
- Weyman, Stanley, 230
- Wharfe River, 240
- Wharton, Edith, 492, 509
- What Dreams May Come*, Gertrude Atherton, 115, 139, 141, 151
- What Maisie Knew*, Henry James, 363
- Wheeler, Charles, 465
- Whistler, J. A. M., 174, 231, 280, 448
- White, Henry, 341, 359, 361, 363
- White, Mrs. Henry, 361
- White, Miss, 361, 362
- White, Richard Grant, 101
- White House, store, 101
- White House, Washington, D.C., 299
- White Morning, The*, Gertrude Atherton, 512, *note*
- White Plains, New York, 224
- Whiteing, Richard, 170, 245, 258, 376
- Whitman, Walt, 220
- Whitney, Mrs. Harry Payne, 492
- Wiggin, Kate Douglas, 212, 520
- Wigley, Mrs. Spencer, 310, 318, 321, 329
- Wilberforce, Archdeacon, 367, 369, 445
- Wilberforce, Mrs., 367, 369, 445

- Wilde, Lady, 181, 182  
 Wilde, Oscar, 181, 183, 217, 229, 268, 272, 277  
 Wilhelm, Kaiser, 415  
 Wilkins, Mary E., 218  
 Wilkins, William Henry, 357  
 Williams, Jesse Lynch, 520  
 Williams, Talcott, 521  
 Wills, Helen, 404, 531, 534  
 Willsie, Honoré (*see* Morrow, Honoré Willsie)  
 Wilson, Florence, 486  
 Wilson, Woodrow, 459, 513  
 Wilson, Mrs., school teacher, 22  
 Windermere, 239  
*Wings of the Dove, The*, Henry James, 363  
*Winter Queen, The*, Marie von Hindenburg, 414  
 Woman's Social and Political Union, 455  
 Wood, Charles Erskine Scott, 534  
 Woolson, Constance Fenimore, 78  
*Words and Their Uses*, White, 101  
 Wordsworth, William, 240  
*World*, New York, 145, 221, 232  
 Wrede, Princess Mary, 427  
 Wurttemberg, Duke of, 414  
*Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë, 238, 378  
 Wyndham, George, 367  
 XENOPHON, 95, 550  
 YEATS, W. B., 541  
*Yellow Book, The*, 230, 241  
 Yonkers, New York, 223  
*Yorkshire Post*, 378  
 Young, Sanborn, 534  
 ZANGWILL, ISRAEL, 230  
 Zetzvich, Doctor von, 394  
 Zola, Emile, 163









